



CHARIVARIA

INFORMED students of the British political scene, reading that the Mayor of Los Angeles is "tired of 10 Downing Street running the show," are asking where he got hold of an idea like that.

Where Honour is Due

Now that the feelings of outraged sportsmen have simmered down a little after the shocking insult of a mere Commandership of the Order of the British Empire offered a favourite footballer (existing Commanders, in not sounding off about the insult to them, showed creditable restraint), some sympathy may be expressed with Her Majesty's advisers in this affair. There are difficulties, among them an awkward expectation that a footballer knighted while still in play should be elevated to the peerage on retirement, a course inviting years of newspaper references



to "Baron Football" or "Lord Soccer" every time he showed his noble nose within reporter range. On the other hand, to study the list of possible decorations and medals is to see that nothing is really precisely suitable to mark meritorious service on the field of sport—though the eye certainly lingers momentarily on a naval honour, potentially adaptable to the present case, namely the Medal for Good Shooting.

Experts, Experts

OUTBREAKS of laughter among London bus queues, seemingly inexplicable, are now thought to have been caused by an item in the papers they were reading, which reported a Commonwealth Relations Office announcement headed

"Reorganization of Ceylon Omnibus Services: London Transport Lend Mission of Advisers."

This Perfume Stinks

ART must change to live, and American advertising men have been led into a significant trend by distillery publicists who are taking full pages in



the newspapers to spread the slogan "To-night when it's one for the road be sure it's coffee." A period of confusion is bound to follow, with coffee-blenders advertising Scotch whisky, automobile manufacturers plugging each other's cars and, as a slight but sympathetic variation, tobacco firms testifying to the link between cigarette smoking and cancer of the lung. The test of the experiment's validity will be whether it holds until the next Presidential election: if the Republicans can get their man in by rooting for the Democrats it's obviously one of the brightest publicity ideas yet.

Blessing in Disguise

REPORTS that Mr. Nehru had sent a New Year message to the Pope attracted little comment. It was just taken as a characteristic indication of his holier-than-thou attitude.

Informed Public

UNDER the heading "Sunny Spring Gave Way to Wet Summer" the *Daily Telegraph* gave readers a close-packed half-column review of 1956 weather—a sign that whatever topics may have fallen from favour with the close of the old year, the fascination of meteorology is here to stay. Will 1957 bring still further developments in the

dissemination of weather news? Some may think it enough to have forecasts in all the morning papers, news stories in the evenings ("Cloudburst Drenches Shoppers"), repeated reports on sound radio, professional expositions on both the television services, and telephone information continuously available to anyone able to dial WEA and afford fourpence; others insist that there remain great sections of the population unreached. Can weather not be taught in the schools this year? What about a free issue of N.H.S. barometers? Will the Home Secretary authorize loud-speaker patrols by police cars, telling the man in the street that it is raining and advising him to put his umbrella up?

New Approach

NEWS that a water pipeline into Jerusalem had been blown up puzzled commentators on the Middle East. But it may just have been someone's way of pointing out that oil isn't everything.

Next, a Few Penny Blacks

SPECULATION on how and why a Dartford philatelist should have bought a sheet of unperforated stamps worth twelve thousand pounds and got himself into all the newspapers in the world



have been wild, wide and unpractical. The arrangements were simplicity itself for a man holding the twin offices of National Public Relations Officer and Postmaster-General.

Line Upon Line

ANGLERS are buzzing with scandalized alarm at the suggestion, from an American scholar, that Izaak Walton

compiled his well-known classic largely from material plagiarized from another fishing book written seventy-five years before. They are now hastening to the libraries to compare the two works, studying Walton's catch of plagiarisms and noting the ones that got away.

If a Job's Worth Doing . . .

VICE-ADMIRAL DANIEL BARBEY, former commander of the U.S. 4th and 7th Fleets, claims that thirty-five submarines with nuclear armament could "destroy most big U.S. cities, kill three-fifths of the population, and knock out half the nation's strategic bomber bases." American lay opinion, conditioned to statistics of mass destruction, is wondering what made him pick on thirty-five.

Russian Roundabout

Is Serov's star in bright ascent?
Is Khrushchev's in decline?
Will Molotov his crimes repent?
Kaganovitch resign?

Has Sholokhov some master-plan?
Can Zukhov soldier on?
Is Malenkov the coming man?
Or has he been and gone?

Will Shepilov or Kosygin
Soon ride upon the crest?
Could someone do the whole lot in
And give us all a rest?



"If you ask me, Power Vacuum in the Middle East sounds suspiciously like an American oil company."

Fool, Britannia!

Many feel that the words of the great song "Rule, Britannia!" (1740) do not exactly fit the facts of to-day. This version tries to express all shades of opinion.

WHEN Britain le-c-e-c-eft her lovely isle
She fou-ou-ou-ou-ou-ou-ound the brown men and the black,
She found the brown, she found the brown men a-and the black,
And with a mother's, a mother's gentle smile
She took them bo-o-o-o-oth upon her back.
*Fool, Britannia! You've had some dividends,
But you ma-a-a-a-ade some filthy friends.*

She gave the heathen law and light,
She healed the sick and dug the drains,
And through the sultry, the sultry tropic night
She brought them trou-ou-ou-ou-ousers, trams and trains.
*Fool, Britannia! They need no trousers there:
Better lea-ea-ea-ea-eave the brown legs bare.*

But when the brown men multiplied
They longed to do their own sweet will:
"Out with the wicked, the wicked whites!" they cried
"Though we should li-i-i-i-ike their money still."
*Fool, Britannia! Philanthropists are fools:
Stay at ho-o-o-o-ome and do your pools!*

So round the rude ungrateful globe
Our noble past is called a crime,
And, as Jehovah, Jehovah said to Job
"Remember tha-a-a-a-at another time."
*Fool, Britannia! It's not the slightest use:
Let them ste-ew-ew-ew-ew in their own juice.*

Still true and trustful, bless her heart,
She pa-a-a-a-a-a-ardons every da-a-a-ark deceit,
And when the treaty, the treaty's torn apart
She signs an-o-o-o-o-o-ther—with the cheat.
*Fool, Britannia! They're sure to do you down:
Britons never, never, never trust the brown.*

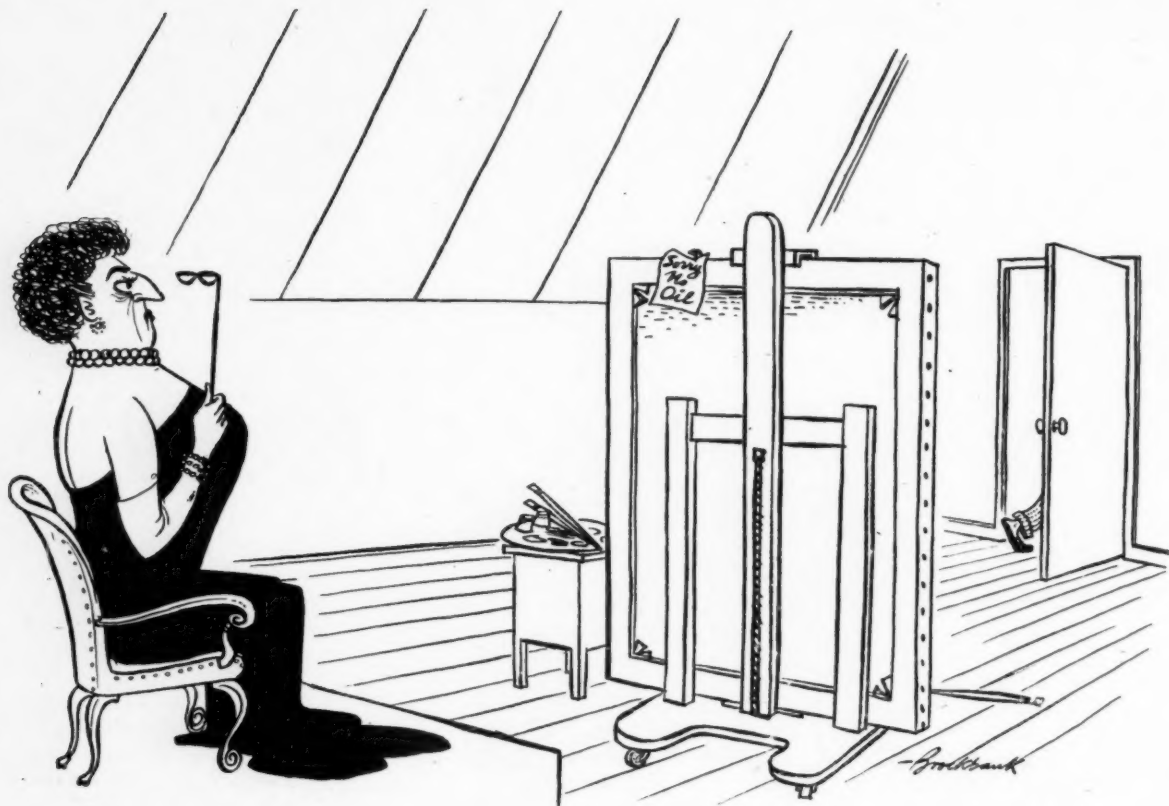
At home, the soft and simple hold
We still should feed the faithless lambs:
But no, Britannia, Britannia keep your gold,
And let them bu-i-i-i-ild their own damned dams.
*Fool, Britannia! Too generous and rash.
Cut your lo-o-o-o-oss and keep your cash.*

Not once or twice, when tyrants rose,
She led the fight and found the goal,
But paid more dearly, more dearly than her foes,
And wrecked herse-c-e-e-elf to save her soul.
*Fool, Britannia! The victor's always vexed:
Be a neu-eu-eu-eu-eutral in the next.*

With men and mo-o-o-o-oney hard to-o find
She bra-a-a-a-a-a-avely does a Ca-a-aptain's job,
She bravely does, she bravely-y does a Ca-aptain's job,
As some old sailor, old sailor, maimed and blind,
By name and mi-i-i-i-ind comma-a-and the mob.
*Fool, Britannia! Forget the Nelson touch:
Learn to dwi-i-i-i-indle, like the Dutch.*

A. P. H.





The Cart-Horse

YOU get a certain type of individual, and he gets this horse, and when it is already too late he perceives that what he has is one which, whatever else it may be ready and willing to do, get behind the cart is what it will not. Like all those who try so hard to deal with their death duties ahead of their deaths, with trusteeships and gifts and risking a fate worse than Lear's, and yet the thing still remains in the wrong order—that is, they pass away, O.K., in an orderly way, but the way the death duties go on behaving is disgraceful, considering the care the man took, poor soul.

Just in passing, it is desirable to mention here that the whole of this cart-before-the-horse thing is based on a misconception, and a vulgar one at that. The phrase originated with an early agent of the R.S.C.P.A. who met a man near Ravello, Italy. This man had a horse and a cart, a fact which interested the agent at the outset

because, contrary to what he had heard of Italy, the horse was no donkey, nor mule, but a horse.

Sensing that here was a kindred spirit, with horse-love, the agent took interest, but as time went on it became apparent, as you looked beneath the mask, that the supposed horse-man was a gadgeteer, and what he was interested in was his cart—how many miles it would do to the ounce of axle-grease if you could get the coupons, and suchlike.

There he would be in the barn, tinkering endlessly with this cart, adjusting the shafts a little this way and that, tapping the wheels, toning the thing up, as he said (it had been a dirt cheap bargain in the first place, but the man believed he had a way with carts), and sometimes just sitting on it and making it jerk back and forth, as though to see was it in reality a cart, or what?

It was at one of these moments that the man from the R.S.P.C.A. said to him "None understands better than I

the problems of you Latins, including soil erosion and what we call lack of Government direction at intermediary levels. Yet I cannot but note with dismay that, while you devote your attention to this vehicle, your beast of burden or—as I prefer to think of it—your fellow-toiler in the agricultural sphere, seeks an all too sparse sustenance in yonder rocky patch of the mountain side. Are you not, my Neapolitan friend, putting your cart before your horse?"

By what schizophrenic brain that simple notion became twisted into its present significance, who can tell? As a matter of fact numerous fellows on intimate terms with the psyche can and have told. They—and this includes Ollenauer—say that the whole thing is an expression of the age-long human frustration at the fact that almost everything that happens is all right in itself but it happens in the wrong order, like—to take the simplest of instances, known to all—by the time you get to be

a colonel, or a film director, or senior Civil Servant, you are too old and tired to see what a joke that is on the community, you have lost your capacity for appreciating the fun and games, and as you riot and bump along, committing one costly and irretrievable blunder after another, you simply cannot understand why everyone else is laughing, far less contribute your puff to the gale of honest mirth.

That is why William Pitt took the elementary precaution—despite debility as a boy—of becoming Chancellor at the age of twenty-two, and if more of our modern statesmen were to follow his example Downing Street would be a little river of light and happiness. Currently it is not. Because you have the tragedy of people who have left things too long, let them get out of place, so that instead of shouting "See me raise a Bank rate!" or "No oil? Why don't they burn sewage gas?" the fellow sits there scribbling an Order here and a Law there with no more *joie de vivre* than if he were sewing mailbags. (The politician, statesman or other leader of politics or finance, who somewhere along the line decides that sewing mailbags can hardly be duller than this, is heading in the right direction, but has often left it too late.)

Probably the whole of this simply ghastly mix-up—and I'm sure I don't know how we're going to explain it to the Chief when he comes in—is due to the misunderstanding about cavemen. Ask fifty people to think back, quickly, to where they think it all began, and you will find that for every one who says "Amœbae" there are a hundred who talk about caves—referring often to the Pyrenees, and were those paintings forgeries or not?

The minority amœba-vote is near the mark, but loses its deposit, and what we have to take account of is that big mass that is under the illusion that we had a cave *right away*. Not at all. Your ancestor was born far out on the wild prairie, and it was only generations later that anyone saw a cave and shouted out "Cave here" and in they went. Once in, a nice time was had, with frescoes and artistic significance, and—to show the stamina they developed—they went on and on painting, without so much as knowing that they were going to become an inspiration and objects of excited controversy.

But suppose, as people erroneously do suppose, that the caves had occurred *at the outset*. What a saving of cost in terms of human suffering. In fact, not having caves available until so much later was about the biggest cart anyone put in front of a horse in the long trek of human history.

Except, as is now disclosed, for the motor-car situation, which, in view of calmer conditions now prevailing, everyone has had a little time to sit back and contemplate. We know now, in the light of late reports of researchists, that before deciding to have motor-cars—a decision which in any case was pushed through late at night on a snap vote—an arrangement should have been made to see that nobody got into one of these fine contraptions without a security-belt round the shoulders, another round the waist, and the car itself heavily padded, as in cell.

The Report, as reported in the newspapers, is good, though like all Reports it is not quite good enough, because in my view one of the things we should be doing while things are just a weeny bit slack in the motor business is to get people accustomed to the idea of prayer-pikes, to be established every ten miles or so on the roads, so that people may

ask for safety on their jolly outing or constructive business trip.

So doing, the motor trade of this country would—not for the first time—have set an example, and one which would soon be followed by everyone in other branches of endeavour.

E.g., not so many years ago there was a banquet in Nairobi or somewhere and everyone said the guest of honour was a model and inspiration to all, and was showing the way in Kenya. There were some fine speeches. As ill-luck would have it, the trial of the man for gross embezzlement and misappropriation of funds occurred as much as three weeks later, so that instead of people being able to read the thing in the proper order—trial first, banquet second—they had to do it the other way round.

This sort of thing has to be corrected.

Keep that cart in front and the horse will look after himself. C. C.

Sense of Anticlimax

"ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH

BIBLE SUNDAY

11 a.m.—

Rev. HAROLD A. COCKBURN, B.D., M.Th.,
Subject: 'There are Giants to be Met.'
Parade of St. Michael's Guides."
Dumfries and Galloway Standard



With Jaculation Dire

By H. F. ELLIS

A CURIOUSLY warm, perhaps primeval sympathy and affection are aroused in the human breast by, and for, anyone who throws anything at anybody. Not quite anything, perhaps. Not bombs, for instance. And not at absolutely anybody. The target ought to be of a kind not normally pelted, and preferably by its nature a scandalous thing to think of pelting. The more outrageous the act of jaculation, the warmer grow the onlooker's feelings towards the man who simply could not resist it. That is why one is drawn even more strongly to Sr. Hugo Unzaga Villegas, who took a shy at the Mona Lisa, than to Mr. F. Perkins, who simply threw eggs and tomatoes at the directors of Sidney Flavel and Company of Leamington Spa.

(That last sentence needs rephrasing. It was Sr. Hugo Unzaga Villegas, 42, who assaulted the Mona Lisa, and Mr. F. Perkins, 63, who had a go at the directors. Any cub reporter will tell you that the first thing the public wants to know about people in the news is their age.)

Every thinking man and woman must at some time have been seized with a desire to throw stones in a picture gallery. The air of religious misery peculiar to these places is an open invitation to commit some enormity. Voices are hushed. Little groups and whorls of suffering humanity stand with bowed shoulders before the timeless masterpieces, waiting in vain to be ravished by those exquisite sensations of fulfilment, awe and a deep contentment of which they have read in cultured essays and appreciations. The idea of violence has already been implanted in their minds by the forcible removal on entering of their sticks and umbrellas. The desire to break out is ripe, and the target—those huge canvases, conceived in joy and agony and executed in a passion of absorbed skill, which now cry out for rescue, for any diversion that will release them from the petrification that overtakes all state-owned things—the target is ready to hand. Only courage, and a weapon, are lacking. Sr. Villegas, 42, had both. "I had a stone in my pocket," he declared when arrested, "and was seized with a desire to throw it." The clumsily disordered

phrasing is readily explicable as that of a Bolivian seeking to make himself understood in a strange land. What he meant to say was that he was seized with a desire to throw stones and had one in his pocket. The distinction, to regular gallery-goers, is clear.

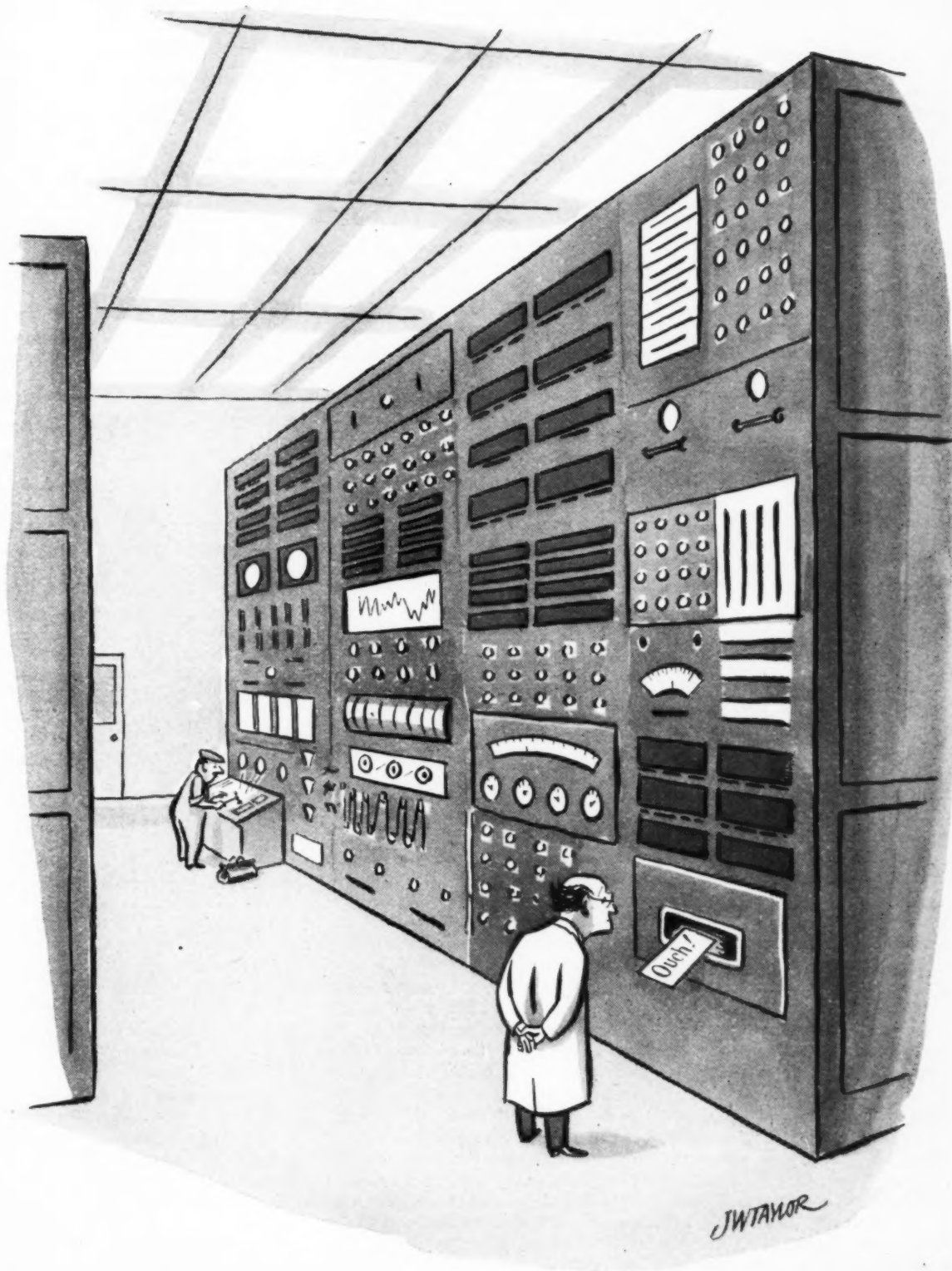
Mr. Perkins, 63, is in a somewhat different category. Not, of course, in his instinctive longing to throw something. Anyone who has ever attended an annual general meeting knows that a row of directors are almost as irresistible as a wallful of masterpieces; there is often, curiously, a smugness about them (one is speaking generally, with no personal reference to the board of Sidney Flavel and Co.) strongly reminiscent of the Gioconda smile. Where the two slingers differ is in the accident, the availability, of their missiles. One accepts—it is *a priori* probable—that Sr. Villegas merely experienced a spasm of revolt familiar to art-lovers and found, to his delight, a random stone in his pocket. But it is too much to suppose that Mr. Perkins, when the hot fit came upon him, was surprised to discover that unlike his fellow shareholders he was seized of three eggs and a tomato. Mr. Perkins himself would scarcely deny premeditation. It is only two

years since he last threw eggs and tomatoes at the board. He stands out clearly as a man who has learnt that there are occasions in life when throwing is the only thing, and he goes prepared. Sr. Villegas relies at present a little too much on luck. But then he is only 42.

The younger man, understandably, emerges as the better marksman—if, that is, one assumes that he aimed at the Mona Lisa (waiting perhaps till he could see the ochres of her eyes) and did not, like Mr. Perkins, fire into the brown not caring which masterpiece he hit. "I threw them at any member of the board," Mr. Perkins has said, "and did not aim at any particular person." Here he was perhaps unwise. It is always better, as any wildfowler could have told him, to pick a definite target, even when the game is practically shoulder-to-shoulder. That indeed is what Mr. Perkins, 61, did two years ago, for the reports clearly state that on that occasion he "threw at the chairman of the company, Mr. D. Wright," whose age, for some inexplicable reason, is not given. He missed, certainly, but not by so wide a margin as on his recent attempt. On New Year's Eve his missiles did no more than splash against the wall of a works canteen near the directors, a sad disappointment—it is almost as if Sr. Villegas had merely hit an attendant or some second-rate work by Greuze—whereas in 1955 some at least of the board were bespattered by ricocheting egg-yolk, and (my newspaper significantly adds) "since that time Mr. D. Wright has retired from office." The earlier effort was obviously a much nearer miss. Advancing years are beginning to tell their tale. And no discredit to Mr. Perkins. Even Sr. Villegas, at 42, only scored an outer on the Mona Lisa's elbow.

It is for clearer eyes and firmer-knit muscles to follow, in the new year that has just begun, the twin examples so finely set in the dying moments of the old. Targets are there in plenty, and any P.P.R.A., or Sir Bernard Docker, will always be happy to point them out. All that is needed is a dash of spirit—and something suitable in the pocket. Here, if anywhere, is an opportunity for all these angry young men one keeps reading about.







The Sunday Pictorial Irregulars

By ALEX ATKINSON

THEY elected to be interviewed in the front room, as their ageing fox terrier had moulted on the parlour chairs and sofa and an aunt was doing her feet in the kitchen. In the front room a draught came under the door, and there was a faint smell of wet tea-leaves. I sat in a rocking chair with chill, knitted upholstery. From this I could see, through the window, railway trucks being shunted high on the windy embankment, beyond allotments where rhubarb poked up out of ruined buckets in the muck and cinders. It was not quite raining, so that the whole place seemed somehow uncompleted. As we talked, the daylight dwindled and slunk away down the empty street, and the curtains were clattered across on wooden rings, and I found myself being surprised that the lampshade did not conceal an upright mantle, or possibly an inverted. There were three real books in the room, concerned respectively with popular necromancy, card games and Sanders of the River.

The man was lithe and fifty, equipped with big knuckles and small watery eyes. He wore very old slippers made

from mud-coloured felt, and they had moulded themselves to the exact shape of his feet. Hair grew out of his ears. The skin was so tight on his face that it may have caused him pain. The woman claimed to be forty-eight. She was very small: at first I feared some part of her was missing. But she was alert and lively, wriggling about the room busily in her ink-black cardigan, straightening here a potted fern, there a table-runner. The child was twenty. He was mostly yellow, and had trained his mouth into a popular expression, so that now it would not close at all: I assumed that he had to avoid the use of words beginning with m or p. He could read biggish print slowly (unless his father was deliberately exaggerating his accomplishments) and he wanted to be a dog-track attendant if he grew up.

The man was pleased to tell me of their vocation, and the woman and the child were proud to watch him speak. Now and then a slug-shaped brown cat twitched and shivered in a bowl of rosy apples on a table: it didn't look comfortable.

"Oh, yes," the man said, "you see,

what it does, it keeps you on the go, and you feel it's something like what you might call worth while, instead of just sit there twiddling your thumbs. Oh, there must be hundreds of us, all up and down the country, hundreds and thousands. And all voluntary, bear in mind. We don't ask for no reward from Fetter Lane, and we don't get none. What it is, see, it's out of the goodness of our hearts. No, we don't get no special training, it's up to us to get the job done the best way we can. Like it might be some woman's hubby walks out of the house and doesn't come back for his tea: what we'd do there, nine times out of ten, we'd get long poles and find him in the canal, with perhaps bricks in his pockets. You see, it keeps you occupied, instead of being cooped up all the time. And Sunday's quite different now to what it used to be—more worth while. We have a bit of a read of the *Pic* before our dinners—the wife likes Rex North on account of him being suave, and the boy cuts out photos of young ladies with their bathing costumes coming off, and I have to see the football. Then after our dinners we

get the back page, where it says "Attention *Pic* Detectives," and size up this week's job.

"No, we don't wear a badge, but there's some talk of having an annual dinner once or twice a year, down south. That way we could like compare notes, and pick up hints and that. As it is now we never see any other *Pic* Tecs except sometimes on a *big* job—like the time when a Mysterious Prowler was terrifying Young Defenceless Girls in a Blue Saloon Car: on the Monday there was close on seven hundred of us at the Spot where he was Last Seen. We camped out in the park and had a bit of a sing-song at night. Some brought magnifying-glasses and fingerprint outfits, but we generally just use our initiative, because it means less to carry. No, we never got the Prowler. It's an unsolved case.

"Yes, I believe we have some Tecs abroad as well—they're called the Picinterpol. That's in case anyone like slips out of our clutches. One little lad we were after for not being at school for a week went and turned up in Antwerp with only a dirty hanky in his pocket. I had a hunch he'd be in Kidderminster, I don't know why, and me and the wife went all the way there on the train and turned it inside-out. Sometimes you strike lucky, sometimes you don't. No, we don't get paid expenses."

The rain had started. I was aware of a steady drumming on the roof of a rabbit-hutch under the window. The man had lit his pipe and it seemed to heat the room a little.

"Oh, we get all kinds of cases.

Hubbies keep sloping off and leaving their wives and eight kiddies in one room, and we get clues to go on. Like we might get a drawing of a bit of the hubby, and arrows showing the Great North Road, and a photo of a shop where he sometimes gets his hair cut, and two of the kiddies playing with a little wooden horse, and a map of Euston Station. Then all we have to do is find him before he gets among undesirable companions. Or some attractive young girl of thirty-nine might leave a comfortable home to seek a life of thrills and excitement down south. We get photos of her without her glasses, and the note she left on the mantelpiece, and her anxious fiancé, and the bus stop at the end of her road, and a scene of debauchery in Streatham or one of those places. She usually turns up working as a waitress in Eastbourne: one of us always spots her, and all is well. Or some drug addict opens a kindergarten and gets burglars for teachers, and we have to round them all up from a photo of the school railings before they can start up another one somewhere.

"You see, what it does, it gives your life a sort of purpose, not like making lampshades. People to-day need something to keep their minds off everything because there's nothing to think about. And if you don't feel up to it one week—like for instance say I had a bit of a sore throat—well, you don't have to take the case on. Wait for *next* week. No sense knocking yourself up, is there?"

"No," I said. I scratched the side of my nose.

And it was then that a strange, cunning expression stole across the face of the woman, and the child put out his fag and crept towards me very slowly on his crêpe, and the man narrowed his eyes and sucked in his breath and felt in his hip pocket for a whistle and a little bag of sand.

"I knew it," said the man. "I knew it all along. I been waiting for you to scratch the side of your nose, because I never forget a clue, and that's what *he* does. You're the Mysterious Prowler in the Blue Saloon Car, and I represent the *Pic* Tecs, and I warn you that anything you do will be taken down and used."

I was out through the back door like a flash, crashing among the bins, scrambling over wet hen-houses in the clammy dark, with the shrill screams of the hunt in my ears. "There he goes!" "Head him off!" "Lock your doors!" "Collect big stones!" All around me in the cramped and dripping gardens the Tecs crouched and slithered. Reinforcements came swarming in from all over the neighbourhood, breathing hard and shining little torches. I was lost and trapped in a wilderness of raspberry canes, michaelmas daisies, clothes lines, dog-kennels, rat-holes, water-butts, bird baths and creosoted jet black palings. The dark resounded with the baying cries of the *Pic* pack, closing in as I lay panting between a compost heap and a lopsided shed full of rusty chicken wire, and I knew in my heart that the game was up, that I would never reach the road and the safety of my blue saloon, never terrify again the young defenceless girls . . .



Child's Guide to Avuncularism

By RANDOLPH S. CHURCHILL

Q. Please, Uncle Randolph, how many uncles have I got in the Cabinet?

A. Well, I think Uncle Duncan is the only real one.

Q. Why have I got only *one* real uncle in the Cabinet?

A. Well, isn't that enough?

Q. Well, someone told me that Uncle Andrew Devonshire has three uncles in the Cabinet.

A. Has he? I can think of only two, Uncle Bobberty Salisbury and Uncle Harold Macmillan.

Q. How about Uncle James Stuart?

A. Oh, I had forgotten about him. He's been Secretary of State for Scotland so long that people think of him more as a Civil Servant than as a politician.

Q. Why do you say that, Uncle Randolph? Is it because he's so civil?

A. Hardly. Politicians nowadays are moved about so often from job to job that when one of them stays for five years one forgets that he is a politician.

Q. I see. Has anyone except Uncle Andrew ever had three uncles in the Cabinet?

A. I'm not sure, but I wouldn't be surprised. You see, Uncle Andrew's mother was a Cecil and his father was a Cavendish; so you would naturally expect him to have more uncles in the Cabinet than most people would have. Nearly all the Dukes of Devonshire and Marquesses of Salisbury have in the past had lots of uncles in the Cabinet.

Q. Who, for instance?

A. Well, Uncle Andrew has a great-uncle, who is still alive, your Great-Great Uncle Bob Cecil of Chelwood. He used

to be in the Cabinet in the days of Mr. Lloyd George.

Q. Then instead of saying "Bob's your uncle" oughtn't people to say when talking to Uncle Andrew "Bob's your great-uncle"?

A. I don't know, but whatever you do, don't be impertinent to Uncle Andrew.

Q. Why doesn't Uncle Andrew go into the Cabinet himself instead of just putting his uncles in?

A. Well, although he is a Duke, he is a very modest man; he probably thinks his uncles are cleverer than he is.

Q. Do you think he is right, Uncle Randolph?

A. Well, perhaps not in every case. Anyway he hasn't insisted on putting *all* his uncles in. His Uncle Christopher is only a back-bencher.

Q. You mean Uncle Christopher Soames?

A. Don't be silly. I mean Uncle Andrew's Uncle Christopher Holland-Martin.

Q. Oh, I see. Is he the one that collects all the money for Uncle Anthony's political campaigns?

A. That's right.

Q. Well, isn't it nepotism for Uncle Andrew to have so many uncles either collecting money or in the Cabinet?

A. I should hardly think so. Nepotism is getting jobs for nephews, and Uncle Andrew has not got any nephews old enough to have jobs.

Q. Well then, would it be right to call it *avuncularism*?

A. Well, I suppose that would be nearly correct.

Q. If Uncle Andrew has got three uncles in the Cabinet doesn't that make him much the most powerful man in England?

A. He doesn't think so.

Q. What do his uncles do?

A. Well, which one do you want to hear about first?

Q. How about Uncle Harold?

A. Well, he is really the cleverest of Uncle Andrew's uncles and he is the one who collects all the taxes and pays all the bills.

Q. Does he like doing that, Uncle Randolph?

A. Of course not. He would much rather be Prime Minister.

Q. Well, why isn't he then?

A. You know very well that your Uncle Anthony and your Uncle Rab would not like that at all.

Q. Oh, I see. What about Great-Uncle Bobberty; what does he do?

A. Well, he is Lord President of the Council.

Q. Isn't he as clever as Great-Uncle Harold?

A. Well, in some ways he's cleverer; but you see, being a Lord, it's almost impossible for him to become Prime Minister. And anyway nearly all the people who write for the newspapers think that Lords must be stupider than plain misters.

Q. Does Great-Uncle Bobberty preside over and lord it over some council?

A. No, hardly ever.

Q. What *does* he do then?

A. He looks after the atom and hydrogen bombs.

Q. What does Great-Uncle James do?

A. Well, he looks after Scotland.

Q. Does he look after it *very* well, like Great-Uncle Bobberty looks after the bombs?

A. I don't know; I never go to Scotland.

Q. Talking of uncles, Uncle Randolph, do you know what the phrase "helping Uncle Anthony to kill dead mice" means?

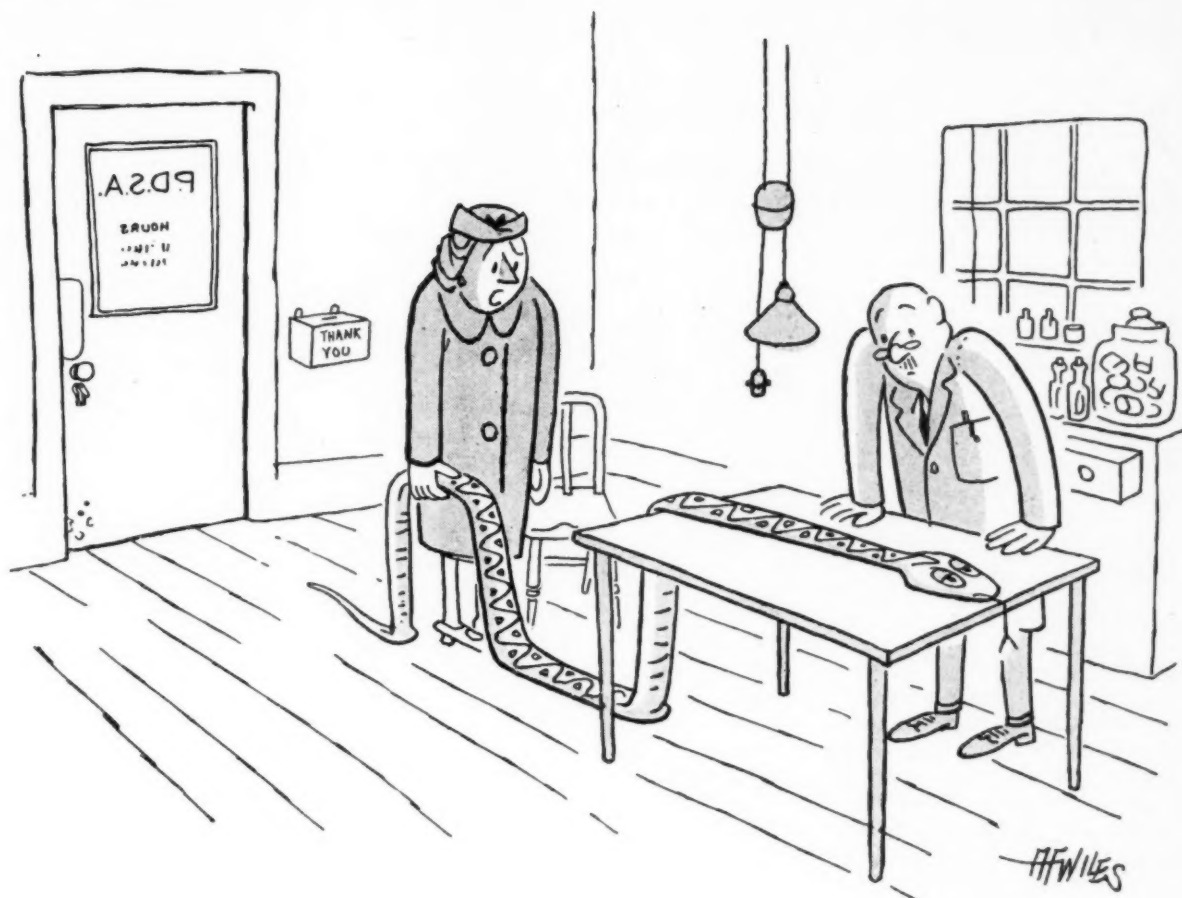
A. No I don't; why do you ask?

Q. Well, some friend of yours sent you for Christmas a dictionary of slang, and I see that it says that this phrase means "Wasting one's time: idling."

A. Well, that could never be said



ROY DAVIS



"Lately she's been so listless."

about your Uncle Anthony. He is very hard-working.

Q. How did Uncle Anthony become Prime Minister without being an uncle of Uncle Andrew's?

A. Mostly by hard work, but of course Uncle Andrew is very fond of him and made a speech in the House of Lords defending him even though Uncle Anthony is not one of his uncles.

Q. Oh, I see.

2 2

A Disgrace to the Force

"When he retired Beveridge was in charge of a vast area of London stretching from Paddington in the west right out to the outskirts of Hertfordshire, twelve miles away. He had under his command a force of nearly three hundred detectives and was responsible for every single crime that happened in those hundred and twenty square miles of territory."

Everybody's Weekly

What Porridge had John Keats?

THE poetry of earth is never dead.
For instance, there's a neighbour of my cousin
Who eats her breakfast on a tray in bed,
Writing Petrarchan Sonnets by the dozen.

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun
The neighbour of my cousin draws the curtain
And scribbles Odes—(how trippingly they're done!)—
Although she's never heard of Keats, for certain.

"And hide in cooling trees!" a voice will run—
(My cousin's neighbour reading out her verses)—
While others mend a sock or bake a bun,
Or wallow in the poetry of curses.

From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead
My cousin's neighbour flits inspired and glad.
The poetry of earth is never dead
As long as she has pencils and a pad.

HAZEL TOWNSON

The Trade Press

By RICHARD GORDON

OUR organs of medical opinion continue to function healthily. Once a week almost every G. P. in the country wakes to hear the welcome thump of the *British Medical Journal* on his doormat. This tells him that it's Saturday and there's only a few hours to go before he can reach for his golf clubs and forget about medicine altogether. If he doesn't take the *B.M.J.*—which is given away free with the B.M.A. sub.—he probably has *The Lancet*. This is independent, printed on better paper, rather New Statesman (sometimes even Church Timesy) and has the distinction of being edited in an Adam house, once appearing in *Time* magazine, and running a medical funny column (Example: Backache felt on contemplating gardening is due to hortosuggestion). Otherwise, the practitioner may get *The Practitioner*, if he doesn't like reading *Medicine Illustrated*, or one of the specialist journals with such compellingly creepy bookstall titles as *Brain*, *Bone*, *Thorax* and *Blood*.

Doctors subscribe more heavily to their professional magazines than to the dog-eared ones they throw into their waiting-rooms, because learned journals

impress the patients when left open on the consulting-room desk and anyway they get them off their income-tax. How many doctors read them is more obscure. At the end of the day it's harder to sit up and concentrate on "Some Problems of Diagnosis in Neurological Infections" than to sit back and doze through "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?" There's a story told gloomily among medical publishers of the newly qualified holiday locum who was given the run of the doctor's empty house, except for a single locked cupboard in the consulting room. As the fortnight wore on this cupboard turned from a fascination for the young man to an obsession. What was inside it? Dangerous drugs? Marihuana cigarettes? Pre-war whisky? The doctor's first wife? Finally he seized a scalpel, prized open the doors, and was overwhelmed by a shower of *British Medical Journals* and *Lancets*, all neatly gummed in their postal wrappers.

The largest medical circulation is enjoyed by the *British Medical Journal*, which is published from that side of B.M.A. House commanding views of

St. Pancras Church, St. Pancras Station, and a row of highly insanitary-looking Bloomsbury back gardens. I know this because I once used to work there, and spent a good deal of time staring at all three. My first job was running the correspondence columns, until I developed a neurosis from the strain of deciphering doctors' handwriting and the editor decided that I was unfit to stay with the living.

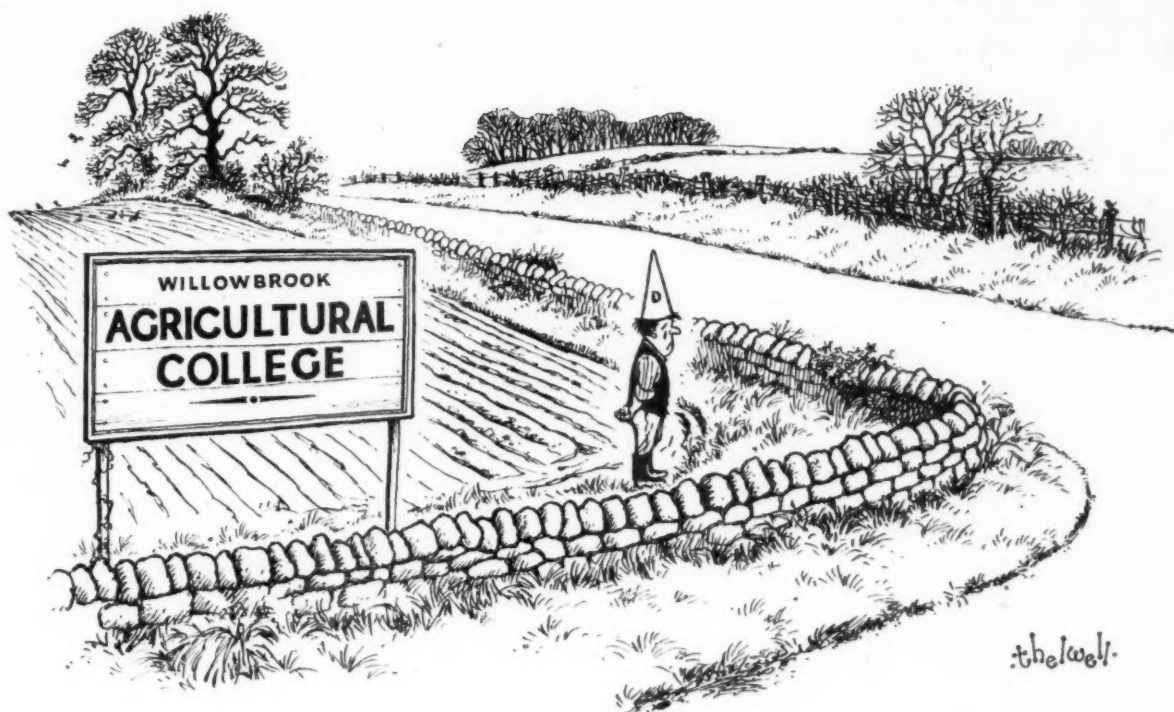
The obituaries were more fun, because they had a sporting element about them. You looked for dead doctors in *The Times*

every morning, then you turned them up in the *Medical Directory* and telephoned their friends for three hundred words by next Tuesday. One day I unfortunately bagged a doctor of divinity by mistake, and not only alarmed a viable senior consultant of the same name who was holidaying in Cornwall but angered all his fellow-physicians. They were just about to put up for his job. Shortly afterwards my appointment ended.

As well as letters and obituaries the *B.M.J.* provides its subscribers with descriptions of the latest clinical gadgets, accounts of patients' actions for damages, a score-card of infective diseases, medical births, deaths and marriages, and a racy section headed "Any Questions?" This gives cut-rate second opinions for the cost of a post-card, and dips into such specialized topics as the effect of television on mice and the effect of mescaline on Mr. Huxley. The rest of the journal is filled with scientific papers, leading articles, and advertisements, which bring brightness to an inescapably drab make-up. In an age demanding Give Us This Day Our Daily Drugs, the manufacturers have plenty of money to splash on their pages. They use calm blue seas to advertise the tranquilizers, sunlit glades for hay-fever cures, and for aspirins models writhing with sick headaches who fall harrowingly on the eye at breakfast. But all is in skilful balance. For instance, a recent issue had thirty-five columns of text proving that smoking kills you and three columns of advertisements for cigarettes.

Although doctors do not read the medical press, they can easily keep *au courant* by following the medical correspondents' columns in the newspapers. These, poor chaps, have to read the whole lot from cover to cover sitting in a corner of a Fleet Street pub every Thursday night. (I know this because I was once one of them, too.) Not that the *B.M.J.* staff feel slighted at the paper passing unopened from the letter-box to the coal-scuttle. The real function of a medical journal doesn't start until twenty years after publication. That's when research workers start turning up the bound volumes to show how misguided or myopic is the medicine of to-day.





Fast Work

By J. B. BOOTHROYD

IN a week so short of news that the *Evening Standard* had to print a six-paragraph survey of Lord Hailsham's boots it was surprising that more was not made of the President of Bolivia's hunger strike. As far as can be discovered from available research sources this was something new in governmental strategy. Heads of States, faced by revolt among their supporters, may sulk, storm, cajole, appear on television, leave for Jamaica or even, under extreme stress, resign. But they go on eating. Policies may crumble and prestige dwindle to a speck, but the flow of steaks and French fried continues uninterrupted.

Unfortunately the novel experiment of President Hernan Siles was not allowed to develop. Bolivians are a spineless lot. When twenty-eight hours had gone by without a sucking pig's passing the Presidential lips, the tinminers and railwaymen couldn't hold out any longer. "We give in," they cried in the streets of La Paz. "Carry on with your proposed anti-inflationary measures, freeze our wages, insist on a policy of lodging-turns, suspend all

plans for pithead baths. We can take it. But for heaven's sake tuck in a napkin and get down to a square meal." So naturally the thing collapsed. The man in the Palace had triumphed, the cost of the adventure a trifling internal discomfort, amply outweighed by an unaccustomed edge to the appetite on resuming operations.

In this country, it is safe to say, the people would show a more enduring spirit. A nation which stood alone in 1940 against all the might of the Luftwaffe might hold out for weeks before battering down the door of 10 Downing Street to make way for a forcible feeding squad. Let us suppose that the Prime Minister had forestalled the Bolivian President in this new technique of persuasion, and had confronted his Suez rebels with an ultimatum of the same kind. The affair would have leaked into the papers in a garbled form at first, perhaps through the political gossip columns.

"I am able to disclose that Sir Anthony Eden is suffering from a loss of appetite as a result of his supporters' criticisms over Suez. When the

dinner-bell sounded at No. 10 last night Lady Eden dined alone. The Prime Minister partook of a glass of milk in his room."

Soon, with the uncanny instinct that makes the British Press the finest in the world, the *Mirror* is out with a full-page picture of a Downing Street dust-bin, a shoulder of mutton sticking out, and the 72-point headline: "IS ANTHONY DOING A GANDHI?" There would be a murmur of interest in the clubs. *The Times* would step in and restore order with a short piece at the foot of the main news page saying that there was no foundation for reports that the Prime Minister had stopped eating, and that in fact Sir Anthony had never eaten more heartily. "Reliable authorities state that he enjoyed a generous helping of roast lamb at dinner last night, with apple-pie and Stilton to follow." The nation would be reading this simultaneously with the *Express* main news headline of the same morning:

EDEN ON HUNGER STRIKE
Nothing But Lemon Juice Since
Tuesday.

After that the thing would be well

under way, and there would be nothing for it but an official communiqué from the Cabinet office. The nine days' wonder would be on.

And there, from the point of view of the principal mover, would be the rub. As long as the front pages were dominated by "EDEN: FAST GOES ON," "NO FOOD YET," "FIVE DAYS ON A LEMON" and "HUNGER HERO STICKS OUT" the man with the hollow cheeks and tightening belt might think it all worth while. But readers, and therefore editors, tire in time, even of a news story this size, and before the nine days were up it would take only a TV cowboy lost on Dartmoor, or a £5,000 wages

grab, to push the starving statesman into comparative obscurity. Before long the references would be merely implicit, with middle-page articles "By a Doctor" saying that a determined man in average health could keep alive for months on nothing but warm water and smelling-salts, and giving comparative endurance figures for manual workers, politicians and camels. Personal Private Secretaries at the Downing Street bedside would by now be leafing through the papers wildly, praying that at least they could find a tiny reference headed "Eden: 27th Day." Soon the last even of these would fade out, the smattering of watchers in the street below would

trickle away, and the only hope of getting the affair back into the limelight would be the unassailably authentic official announcement ripe for report under the headline: "P.M. SINKING."

Only then (and if then) would British morale begin to crack. Some softy would begin it all by writing to the *Telegraph*: "Even those who regard Eden as stubborn and wrongheaded must acknowledge that to permit events to take their course at No. 10 Downing Street is to do violence to the conscience of the nation. When future historians . . ." Sentimentality would creep in. Suez rebels would get angry letters from their constituents, accusing them of murdering the best-dressed Prime Minister since Disraeli, and in no time at all popular feeling would be roused to a frenzy. The *Express* would have scathing leaders revealing that Mr. Gaitskell was eating three and four meals a day; Conservative Association deputations would queue up in Whitehall with shepherd's pies, rice puddings and vacuum flasks of cocoa; and Mr. Oliver Poole, at the Conservative Central Office, would hastily draft compromise proposals: supposing the Suez group agreed to suspend speeches actively attacking Government policy, would the Prime Minister take a cup of weak beef-tea? Eventually something would be worked out, until the headline, "EDEN: A BOILED EGG," told the world that the whole painful incident was over.

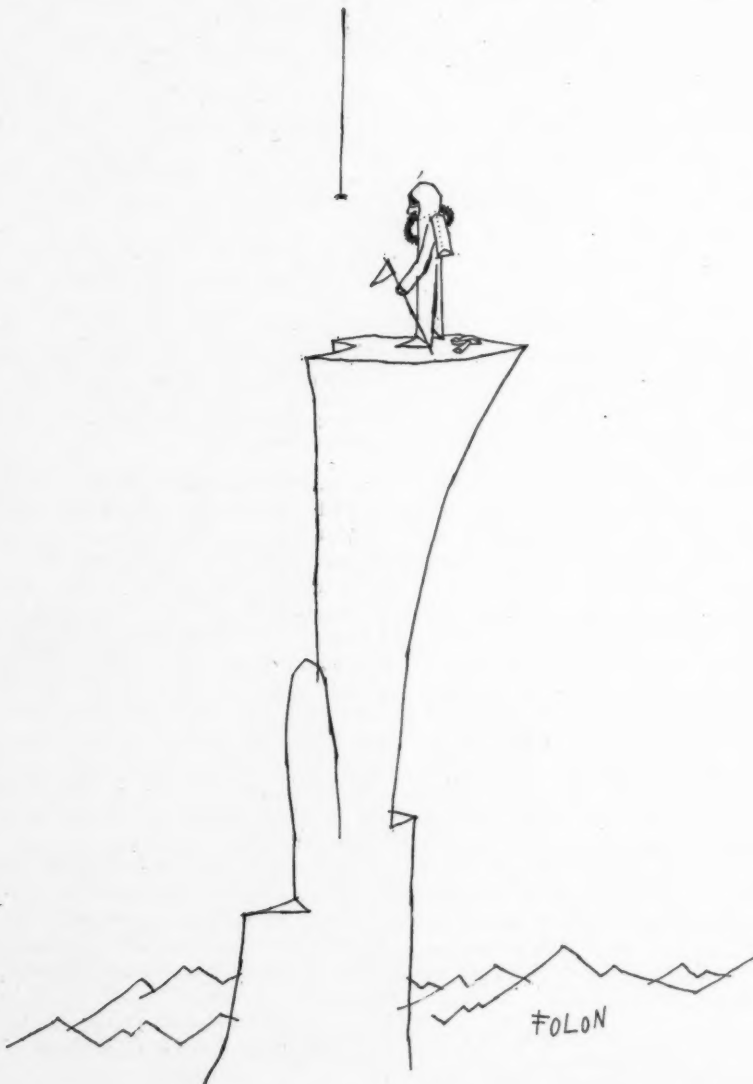
But of course a national leader has to be pretty sure of his place in the people's hearts before he starts a thing like this. President Hernan Siles, when he first began to wave away the waiters, knew pretty well where he stood. Other men might be well advised to think twice before so much as declining a second helping of roast beef and Yorkshire.

§ §

"There is a presiding genius, a dominating figure over the brilliance of Deauville—the man who has made it what it is to-day: M. Francois Andre. They call him 'King of Deauville and Cannes' . . . His is the story of the local boy who made good. He started life as the son of a brewer. To-day, at seventy, he is in the Casino gambling-rooms at three and four in the morning, up again at eight to be at work in his office . . . Many are the stories they tell of this man . . ."

Daily Mail

The funniest is about his having made good.





Year of Jubilo



Issuing a very relevant statement, the relevant Board of Control has this week stated that while it is all very well for the whole populace to drop everything and go crazy with enthusiasm celebrating, as it traditionally does, the anniversaries of the birth of Warren Hastings, the invention of the Spinning Jenny, the apprehension of Burke and Hare by the relevant authorities, and the first publication of "The Hound of the Baskervilles," it still is not well enough.

Anniversary-celebration short-fall is widely felt, chiefly through lack of initiative on the part of local authorities, some of whom this year were disclosed as having no plans for celebrating the Birth of the Blues, the Birth of a Nation or the Birth of Mr. Heathcoat Amory, esteemed Minister of Agriculture.

THERE is not a month in a year when an anniversary cannot be feted in traditional style, provided the initiative is provided.

Rich indeed in such occasions is JANUARY. And in many an English village the knowledgeable traveller is already privileged to attend the quaint ritual of Earl Attlee Day—January 3.

On what is, in some districts, known as the Birthday of the Earl, the celebrants are wont to sit down between the hours of 8 and 9 a.m. to what is called traditionally a "breakfast." This is a meal at which those participating consume such time-hallowed dishes as pieces of bacon with eggs a-top, washed down with "coffee" or "tea."

During the ceremony occurs the well-known "reading of the papers." In southern districts it is common practice for one of the elders to read a few words from the masterwork *Clement and Inclement*, stating that the newspapers are "interesting." In the north, the more usually chosen extract is "not much news in the papers to-day."

The more fanatical sects often continue the celebrations throughout the day, eating again at about the first hour after noon, and going through a "tea" ritual a few hours later. These are all interesting and picturesque ceremonies and well repay a visit.

In the same month was published *Leaves from Our Journal in Scotland*, by Queen Victoria. Tickets for the Anniversary Lunch may be obtained from Miss Foyle.

Although it is customary during FEBRUARY to wear black and sit at home mourning the death, on the 20th of that month in 1855, of Joseph Hume, an exception is made for the 25th, on which notable date in 1797 the London banks suspended all cash payments, on the ground that the Chancellor did not wish people to have the use of their money. The dancing of the somewhat licentious "Mock and Squeeze" on this day used to give rise to scenes of riot. Tourists will be

happy to know that a more decorous version of the proceeding has now been evolved and may be viewed at any good bank.

It may be taken for granted that Anniversary Celebration Organizers will, during MARCH, find their hands full with the marshalling of those desiring to pay, on the 21st, one more annual tribute to Sir Garnet Wolseley, who on that date returned from his successful expedition against the Ashanti, and the—perhaps larger—throng anxious to celebrate, on the 29th, the Royal opening of the Albert Hall.

As the Board points out, APRIL and MAY are not marked by any celebrations south of the Dee. However, lest festive spirits flag, it may be noted that two Parliamentary Under-Secretaries were born in JUNE and may be worshipped concurrently, while on JULY 24, 1891, British troops extinguished a big fire at the palace of the Khedive of Egypt and were heartily thanked for their initiative.

In the same month the first Sunday Trading Bill was presented to the House of Commons and withdrawn after nation-wide rioting.

The Board is ready to provide organizers with any additional information required covering the second half of the year. For example, we have, in AUGUST 1848, the last known outbreak of cholera in Britain; the total failure of crops, due to rain, in SEPTEMBER 1879; the cattle plague which ravaged the country in OCTOBER 1865; and the murderous cold of NOVEMBER some years later. Several of these dates are traditionally celebrated by dances on the roof of the Air Ministry.

For use of those who, as the Mayor of Padesbury recently said, "like to see a drop of blood on the calendar," a well-illustrated brochure entitled "Murderers' Months" has also been prepared, with a ready reminder of murder anniversaries from Crippen to Christie inclusive, and some suggestions as to what YOU can do to keep YOUR local murderer's memory green.

CLAUD COCKBURN



The Dean of Canterbury

What curious creed does Hewlett preach,

What singular gospel spread?

*Perhaps that the doctrines the Christians teach
Should all be taken as red.*



Epithalamium

To be sung
at the Bridal Door
of a Smart Couple

The Bride's friends bless the bed

We whispered at your wedding
Like people at a play
And wondered to each other
If the Bride designed her train
And noticed how her mother
Seemed to feel a sense of strain.
But now it comes to bedding,
To the ancient rite of bedding,
To the fascinating bedding,
We must chant the ancient lay.

The Groom's friends bless the family

If the Groom possess a vigour
That we have not noticed yet,
If you fancy procreation,
If you're fools and have a fling,
After all the tribulation
That bearing babes can bring
May the Bride regain her figure,
Her sweet, seductive figure,
Her fascinating figure
Which she worked so hard to get.



The Bride's friends bless the home

May your house, though chance or check or
Painter's mate undo
The plans you contemplated,
Your clever colour-blends,
At last be decorated;
And may your kinder friends
Not notice how your décor
Your vivid, livid décor,
Your fascinating décor
Is the perfect foil for you.

The Groom's friends pray for prosperity

O Groom, you've been a dandy
And fond of living fine,
And though taxes, education
And a fashionable wife
May reduce your estimation
Of your proper mode of life,
May you still be good for brandy,
For a decent wine and brandy,
A fascinating brandy,
When we are asked to dine.

All bless the marriage

And when a few more seasons
Have worked their gentle art
And changed you, changed you, changed you
Like dunes beneath the wind
And the comforts you arranged you
Have somehow left behind,
May we know all the reasons,
The bitter, secret reasons,
The fascinating reasons
Why your marriage fell apart.

PETER DICKINSON



I, too, can Write

By WANDA BURGAN

"DARKNESS oozed out from between the trees, as a quick shiver ruffled the brooding stillness of the water.

The wind piped drearily. He surrendered himself to gloomy thought, and a little independent thread of inquiry ran through the texture of his mind and died away.

Doubt tortured him."

That's the beginning of my best-selling novel. It's going to be a spy thriller. The above is all I have written so far, but the rest is going to be a breeze. The beginning was a breeze, too. Everything is going to be a breeze and I am going to get to be a great novelist after all.

I suppose every writer who finally sees his goal within reach goes through the experience I have just had—the experience of discovering, in a moment of great revelation, the one thing that is going to mean the difference between success and failure.

The one thing I have discovered is a book called *Fifteen Thousand Useful Phrases*. The whole of my spy thriller quoted above (and it's pretty darned Amblerish, if I do say so myself) is straight out of the book. Naturally my own talent was called into play in the choosing and putting together of the expressions. And don't fool yourself; this demands skilled judgment and discrimination. For example, instead of selecting "Doubt tortured him," I might have turned to page 193 and chosen "He was quaking on the precipice of a bad bilious attack." But that wouldn't have been in keeping. That's where the art comes in.

The wonderful thing is that once I get the knack of this type of novel-writing I shall be able to turn them out like cookies. I intend to do a science fiction story when I am through with the spy yarn, and it will go something like this (I'll put parentheses around the sections taken from the book so you'll know which parts are me and which are *Fifteen Thousand Useful Phrases*):

"We found ourselves in (a weird world of morbid horrors). (All was a vague jumble of chaotic impressions.) We were already (haunted with a chill

and unearthly foreboding), when (events took an unexpected sinister turn)."

I doubt if that paragraph will begin the book, but I'll certainly work it in somewhere.

Like all good novelists, I shall live with my characters. A quick run-down has already told me that my heroine's face can be torn with conflict, gravely authoritative, or lit with a fire of decision, and that her heart can flutter with a vague terror, pound in her throat, appear to abdicate its duties, or be full of speechless sorrow, as the case may be. She can be demure and dimly appealing, or exquisitely simple, or gripped with a sense of suffocation and panic, or oppressed by a dead melancholy, or stricken to the soul, or conscious of a tumultuous rush of sensations.

My hero can be aware of emotion, discreetly silent, empty of thought, entangled in a paradox, haunted and begirt by presences, measured and urbane, most profoundly sceptical, utterly detached from life, or nothing if not grandiloquent. His brow can either be in his hand or grow knit and gloomy, while his face can dismiss its shadow, fall abruptly into stern lines, or show a pleased bewilderment. His heart can rebuke him or assert itself again, thunderously beating.

The interesting thing about all this is that so far I have limited myself to the section of the book devoted to literary expressions. There are forty-six pages of them. In addition, the book offers me twenty-two pages of Felicitous Phrases, sixteen pages of Impressive Phrases, twenty-six pages of Significant Phrases, and fifty-three pages of Striking Similes. Then, when I have got through all those, I can fall back on thirty-eight pages of Miscellaneous Phrases.

As a matter of fact *Fifteen Thousand Useful Phrases* is going to take care of my entire writing career. When I get to be rich and famous there will be literary

cocktail parties in my honour, of course, and before attending them I shall study my Conversational Phrases (twenty-nine pages of them). I suppose I'll have to consider the possibility of lecture tours, and I'll be able to handle such engagements with grace and ease, and at some length, after referring to Public Speaking Phrases (ninety-nine pages).

I am on my way. (Pledged with enthusiastic fervour) to turn out books which will (beguile the tedious hours) for my reading public, I shall (gaze dimly through a maze of traditions) and (go straight, as if by magic, to the inner meaning).

Not for me the (stale and facile platitude). Nor shall I (lapse into pathos and absurdity). With (an exquisite perception of things beautiful and rare) I shall offer my public books that will be of (profound and absorbing interest) and (a perfect carnival of fun) as well.

Perhaps (a very practised and somewhat fastidious critic), (varnished over with a cold repellent cynicism), who does his (judging without waiting to ponder over bulky tomes) will say ("And what is all this pother about?") but this I shall be prepared to ignore (in a wise, superior, slightly scornful manner).

Mine shall be (the flawless triumph of art). I suppose I shall be (lionized by fashionable society) and subjected to (the buzz of idolizing admiration) and (the plaudits of the unlettered mob).

But I can take it.



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"The meeting went on longer than I expected."

The Joke Club

By ANTHONY CARSON

I HAD been living, on and off, for a year in Tarragona before I heard about the Joke Club. Nobody had told me about it because I was English. In Spain there is a fixed idea that the Englishman is assembled together like a rather grim machine in order to resemble a human being. Equipped with vacuum flasks, dictionaries, and sweating in tweeds, he thrusts a horse-like wife into museums and bull-rings, stands like a sphinx with a camera at fiestas, and somewhere, vaguely behind his head, there is a halo of rain. Of course this is wrong, but there is a grain of truth; we are a race with a load of five, at brewers' outings, when a friend falls down the stairs, and then the

muscles of our face ache like runner's calves. But this has little to do with the Joke Club.

This venerable club, with headquarters at Tarragona, has by now, in these pompous times, petered out in a vapour of scooters and foreign girls and ridiculous politics. In the Plaza of the Fountain (or Town Hall Square if you prefer it—it doesn't matter to me) sitting at the various bars facing the old flowing life of the city, women drawing water, children dribbling their cruel flutes, gipsies sleeping off a night of knives, needle-thin cats, watchmen, blind lottery-ticket sellers, are still various ageing members. It is worth staying in the Square of the Fountain till the stars dim, to draw out reminiscences of the

time when the Joke Club blossomed like a tree with pigeons.

The President in those days was a millionaire called Don Pepino. He was enormously strong and tall, and wore a partly shaved beard and moustache, in the sense that one half of his face was slightly different from the other. Added to this, his expression was serious and forbidding. He was the sort of man who invited questions like "When will the train leave?" or "What is the time?" and for this purpose he wore a huge clock in a specially contrived pocket in his trousers, attached to a very long silver chain. It took him a considerable time to extract this clock, and even when the questioner, embarrassed beyond belief, wished to rush away to

the old comforts and troubles of normal life he was riveted by a cold and malevolent eye.

Joke day in Spain is the day of the Innocents, December the twenty-eighth, when Herod perpetrated his grim jest on the children of Palestine. The fervour of this day, as when all good Spanish fathers used to beat their sleeping sons at sunrise and shower them with chocolate creams, has a little dimmed, but the Joke Club of Tarragona did something to reanimate the spirit. Following random conversations in the Square of the Fountain I select the following ingenious and well-organized examples, all of them authentic. (I use the word "authentic" deservedly, since so many idiotic intellectuals ask one how one invents one's stories.)

The Cement Joke. A fairly simple game, but requiring good planning, stealth and manual dexterity. The club, under the supervision of the half-shaved President, Don Pepino, reported in Fountain Square at three o'clock in the morning and filled every keyhole in every door with cement. Hours later, men were shouting, and women were crying out of top windows, dogs fouled the furniture, cats were sick in the stoves, widows were rescued by ladders, love died in the blinds, and the fire brigade was called.

The Newspaper Joke. This required good timing. The act of the newspaper joke took place in the railway junction of San Vicente, at the exact time when two of those prehistoric Spanish trains were passing each other, one bound for Valencia, the other for Barcelona. All slowly sliding trains have men's faces crammed at the windows, looking for all the fantastic things which can only happen in stations: women throwing babies into first-class carriages, men hurling themselves under expresses, might-have-been faces, tragedies, and trollies with fruit. As these two trains gathered speed the President gave a sign and slapped one of these ruminating, serious Catalan faces with a rolled newspaper. (A copy of the *Vanguardia*, to be exact. It is a bulky review with photographs of men with medals opening viaducts, and slightly resembles *The Times*.) This was followed by gestures of derision, and the victim leant out of the window, his face a huge melon of rage. "And your grandmother," added the President, which

made the melon try to climb out of the window, but the train gathered speed, and the Vice-President of the club, two carriages further up, struck the same face with another copy of the *Vanguardia*. "And your grandfather," shouted the Vice-President. By now the two trains were rocking with laughter, and the man was half-out of the window like a dervish brandishing his fists at the two copies of this eminent newspaper. In the last carriage the secretary of the club was waiting with a third copy. "And your aunt," he cried, whacking the unknown, neat, organized, stern, disembodied face with it. Then the trains, crammed with unreason, laughter and rage, parted company and the stationmaster went back to his tiny glass of wine.

The Bicycle Joke. Don Pepino was an

expert on the bicycle and (as I shall relate later) on the guitar. On one occasion he and a friend made a bicycle tour of Mallorca, and enlivened the excursion by tearing as fast as possible downhill into the middle of crammed market places and crowded cafés shouting "No brakes. No brakes. For God's sake look out." By exquisite handling of the machines they caused no serious physical damage, and Don Pepino, whose wallet was always crammed with joke money, willingly paid expenses for smashed soda-water siphons, bandages, ointment, damaged fruit stalls, broken eggs and ruined furniture.

The Dummy Man Joke. This was one of the most successful jokes in the Club repertoire. Only a few days ago I met one of the men who took part in it, an expert on Spanish billiards, to



whom I am indebted for much of this material. He and the President used to construct a dummy man of straw, dressed in quite an expensive suit, shirt, collar, tie, and surmounted by a mask with a hat crammed over it. In the mouth of the mask they stuck a jaunty smouldering cigar. At noon on the day of the Innocents, when the streets were full of people escaping from their creditors, the President and my friend would issue from a house carrying the dummy debauchee between them, talking animatedly, and roaring with laughter at the straw man's witty jokes. A few minutes later a terribly fast car (driven by the secretary of the Club) would appear behind them, the two live organisms would jump apart, leaving the tottering automaton in the middle of the road. The car would drive straight over it, continue, stop, and the secretary would nonchalantly light a cigarette. Immediately the car would be surrounded by people like angry flies. Death is well understood in Spain, death by taxes, unrequited love, Spanish Railways, and the deep, dark blood of guilt, but death by modern transport is not yet understood. In this sense the Spanish are not civilized. The shouting crowd, demonstrating

around the car, on one occasion bodily picked it up and extracted the robot, still smoking his cigar. This sensational incident was then repeated in at least twenty other streets.

Don Pepino, the Guitar and the Lame Beggar. Don Pepino was (as I have stated) an expert guitar player, and had a very great friend, Paco, who was a lame beggar. "Come, Paco," said Don Pepino to him one day, "let us leave Tarragona and go to Zaragoza." "What shall we do there?" asked Paco. "Beg in the streets," said Don Pepino. "But you are a millionaire," said Paco. "I wish to earn some honest bread," said Don Pepino. The next day they met, Don Pepino was wearing a filthy suit, a huge diamond solitaire ring and had a guitar slung over his back. They arrived in Zaragoza, established their pitch at the corner of the Bank of Spain, and made about fifty pesetas a day. At the end of the week they were thrown into prison. "But why does that huge, half-shaved beggar wear a diamond ring?" said the Chief of Police. "It must be worth at least fifty thousand pesetas." Inquiries were made, and the two beggars were released. "But you can't sleep in the streets," said the Chief of Police. "Very well," said Don Pepino,

humping his guitar on his back, and took Paco to the best hotel in Zaragoza. "You can't stay in this hotel," said the outraged proprietor, smelling old cheese, rats, dirty socks, and congealed oil. "Get in touch with the Chief of Police," said Don Pepino, walking into the tinkling restaurant, followed by Paco, seating himself and picking up the menu. "Lobster Mayonnaise," he said to the head waiter. They stayed in the hotel a week, sitting at an enormous solitary table flanked by frightened waiters, and then returned to Tarragona.

The Pitcher Joke. A fairly simple operation, relying on motives (if one can employ such a word) of pure, crystal-clear absurdity. Don Pepino purchased a hundred earthenware pitchers at a cost of five pesetas each and took a train to the nearest village where a market was being held. Once in the market place, he set up a stall and began crying his wares. "How much?" asked some good saint-loving woman with a string of grandchildren and a dream of beans. "Twenty-five pesetas," said Don Pepino with the face of an archbishop. "God's name be saved," wailed the old woman, beating her head, "but they are worth eight pesetas and not a centimo more." "In that case," cried Don Pepino in a great voice, "you will never have one. I would rather destroy every single pitcher on my stall." And in front of a great crowd of beetle-black women muttering their *Ave Marias*, he smashed one after the other of his hundred pitchers, dismantled his stall, and was not heard of again except in legend.

For haters of the pointless, for those dedicated to insensate labour, whose only idea of beauty and recreation is the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum and the rigid morality of their bank account, I hasten to point out that Don Pepino (according to the gossip of Fountain Square) has lost all his fortune and lives in penury in Barcelona, working for the Post Office or the Ministry of Pensions. This is his biggest joke of all.

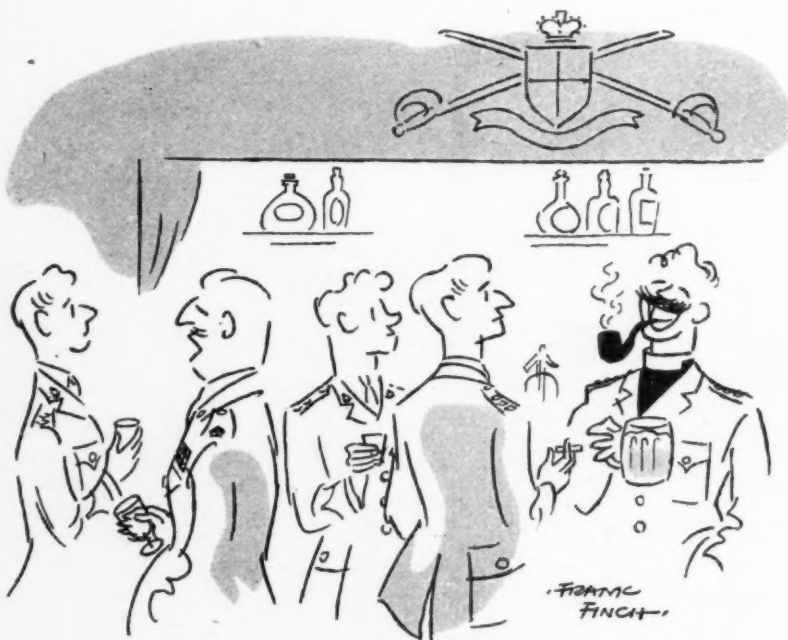
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"THE ASSASSINS
Of American Presidents
Robert J. Donovan

"... lively and useful ... this fascinating book."—D. W. Brogan in the *Spectator*.

Publisher's advertisement

Anyone not like Ike?



"I don't like his 'Unholier than thou' attitude."



Comprehensive Health

By INEZ HOLDEN

I WAS once acquainted with a rather kittenish Frau from Charlottenburg. Her name was Sieglinde and she was married to my old friend Doctor Bruno Bronstein.

Bruno was a Doctor of Philosophy, Sieglinde was the daughter of a Doctor of Medicine, but she herself knew nothing of either of these subjects, nevertheless she talked about them a great deal.

Sieglinde liked to talk, almost interminably, about the importance of a "Comprehensive Health Scheme."

"We have such a scheme in Germany," she said.

"We have one in England too now," we answered.

"It was Bismarck who started all that."

"Bevan," we said.

"With us Bismarck," she persisted.

"With us Bevan," we said.

Bruno, in love with his gruesome German girl, could bear being continually interrupted in a foreign accent much better than we could. But even saintly Bruno could not stand her idiotic Aryan name, Sieglinde, so he shortened it to Linda.

Bruno said that Linda, in her innocence, evidently saw a "Comprehensive Health Scheme" as a kind of universal "Cure-All," but of course, excellent and even essential as such a scheme was, there would always remain difficulties of diagnosis, "and so on and so on and so on," a phrase always used by Bruno as a signal that he would like to turn the talk on to some more rewarding and enjoyable subject.

Linda, however, ignoring Bruno's wishes, battered away in a militant monotone for a full half-hour, building up the cause of a Comprehensive Health

Scheme which had in any case already been won.

This was bad enough, but on that same evening, when Bruno was out of carshot, Linda told us that she believed herself to be Bruno's greatest social asset.

"I find that people like very much to come and see me often," she said. "After all, we are refugees, here in Paris, and it could be very lonely." She smiled in her bland way. "But I love to surround my old Bruno with interesting people, otherwise I am afraid he would get very dull just working all the time. Bruno is so sweet but, as you see, he is altogether divorced from reality."

At this moment the exasperated guests were wishing that Linda was altogether divorced from Bruno too. But a year later, when Linda landed in London as Bruno's widow, all his



"It's your big break, Parker—a new series at a peak period, with a weekly quiz, audience participation, script by Julius Caesar and a free hand with additional gags."

friends were concerned, for his sake, in concealing the fact of her unpopularity from Linda herself. Therefore we all took it in turns to invite her to stay.

Unfortunately for my friend Juliette, Linda became ill in her house. Linda's only symptom was a swollen ankle, but it was painful, it prevented her from walking, and so she took to her bed where she also developed insomnia all night and sleepy sickness all day.

At this point we decided to call in the services of the Comprehensive Health Scheme. But it proved far more difficult than we had anticipated.

My own doctor was just outside the prescribed area, while Juliette's doctor was himself ill in hospital. We tried two others but both had their "full complement of panel patients." We took the names of the local doctors from the Post Office list and asked Linda to choose one, but she said that this was "an unscientific approach."

Then we heard of yet another doctor. "Don't let yourself be put off by his decisive manner and extreme good looks," we told Linda. "This young Doctor Slinger is well thought of in the

medical profession in spite of his overwhelming charm and smooth bedside manner."

Naturally we had learnt enough about Linda by now to know that this was the sort of doctor most likely to appeal to her.

While we waited for the good-looking young doctor Juliette told Linda that swollen ankles had been quite usual at her boarding school. "It was usually in the winter terms when we played hockey," Juliette said.

"But I have never played hockey," Linda said. "It is an absolutely English game, is it not?"

"Oh, absolutely," we answered. "Some of us think too much so." When Doctor Slinger arrived he was neither decisive nor good looking. He turned out to be Doctor Slinger, senior. "My son has emigrated to Rhodesia," he said, "and I have inherited all his patients. Ha-ha!"

"Ha-ha," we said, wondering why he thought it funny, since we did not.

"I have also inherited all my son's book work, form-filling and such like," Doctor Slinger said. "Ha-ha!"

"Ha-ha," we replied, seeing the gallows humour in this situation. Doctor Slinger, senior, then explained to Linda that the Comprehensive Health Scheme also took in all foreigners "... so you need have no fear."

Linda said that she had no fear and that she was not a foreigner either. "But I do not think foreigners should be included ... otherwise vy should it be called Der National Health? Vy can't ve British have the benefit of this scheme for ourselves?" Then she threw in the information that her father had been a distinguished doctor.

"Really. Who?" Doctor Slinger asked.

"Doctor Henkler von Zehlendorf West," Linda answered.

By this time Doctor Slinger the Elder was almost too tired and confused to look at Linda's ankle at all, and when at last he did so he only asked her if she had been playing much hockey.

Doctor Slinger then handed me the address of a hospital. "You ring them up," he said. "I always find it so difficult to hear on the damn telephone, and anyhow it is always a trouble getting an appointment there."

It was a trouble to me too, but at last Linda was given a date which seemed to us a distressingly long distance ahead.

"If she still can't walk by then you'd better take her along in a taxi," said Doctor Slinger, who did not seem to have comprehended anything about the Comprehensive Health Scheme—not even the existence of the Hospital Car Service. "Of course as she's the daughter of a doctor I suppose we should have had to treat her free anyway," he said vaguely as he went out.

The tiresome inefficiency of Doctor Slinger was followed by the still more tiresome efficiency of his secretary, who began sending us a series of forms by every post; but of course all these had long since been filled up and returned by the time Linda reached her first hospital day.

Most of Linda's fellow-patients, sitting on a long bench in the orthopaedic department, appeared to have the same sort of swollen ankles as Linda herself. Nevertheless when the specialist examined her ankle at last he said he had never seen anything like it before.

Then began Linda's intensive life as a registered incoming Out-Patient.

There was the second lot of X-Ray photographs to be taken. The first had got lost. "These things will happen," the young probationer nurse said brightly. "We learn by our mistakes. It is much the best way."

There was the difficulty of the coloured nurses who could never tell one white person from another, so that they were constantly giving Linda treatment intended for other patients; and by now Linda was trapped in the bureaucratic machinery, because she could not be discharged from the hospital until she could see the specialist again and he was too busy to see her. So she was now striding across the park, three times a week, for medical aid, which might well have been of some use in the days when she had been unable to walk at all or to get an appointment with the over-worked specialist in the under-staffed hospital.

By now even more sympathetic to the memory of our old friend Bruno than we had been before, we began coaching Linda for her final interview, and when the longed-for day dawned we waited anxiously for her return.

"If she gets back in time she could still catch the last plane to Paris," Juliette said. "I mean if we drove her right up to the airport."

But Linda was several hours late.

"No good," she said. "I am still not free from the hospital. I went dancing into the specialist's room, just as you advised, and I said 'I can run, hop, walk, jump, skip, anything you like, I am free from all aches and pains, never felt better—in fact I am perfectly vell.' But this man simply stared at me and then he said 'Ve have never had a patient who talked in such a vay before,' and he sent me straight up to the psychiatric department. The doctor there was very interested in me. He wrote down everything I told him and now he says he must see me, still, at least vunce a veek."

We knew now that Linda would soon have a liking for illness with its unlimited opportunities for tyranny, and the long rests without responsibility all day, and the regular meals throughout the night. We saw too that if Linda couldn't get physical ill-health she would willingly settle for a minor form of mental ill-health.

We therefore started a sustained and concentrated campaign to unload Linda.

Though our doctors were good, we said, the truth of the matter was that science had not yet caught up with Linda's complicated state of health. But there was one doctor who might perhaps be worthy of her—an Englishman, now by a curious chance domiciled in France, where she had hundreds, perhaps thousands of friends, who must be missing her at this very moment.

This young doctor, we said, was even better looking than Doctor Slinger, junior, whom, as it turned out, we had never seen but perhaps this was just as well, because it had to be admitted that our doctors could never give Linda all the time she needed and deserved because of the popularity of the Comprehensive Health Scheme.

A few weeks later Linda wrote from

Paris. She was getting on very well with the young Anglo-French doctor. He was now prescribing sleeping pills, pep pills, a sedative and some vitamin pills. He was also curing her insomnia by hypnosis and her nightmares by analysis. He was very sympathetic about her ankle because he had damaged his own ankle. It turned out that he was an amateur hockey player.

Linda also wrote that she realized we had all been very disappointed because her illness had prevented her from giving as much of her time and her company to us as she would have liked. However it was some consolation to her to know that she had not been a burden on her friends owing to the excellent "Comprehensive Health Scheme" copied by Bevan from Bismarck.

Draw Your Own Politicians



Volcano Time in the Home Counties

IT may never happen—let us hope it won't—but no man in his senses can deny that the ugly situation brewing in the weird assortment of ethnic, religious and economic agglomerations known as the Home Counties *could* boil over during 1957. And with appalling consequences.

The tension in the peripheral metropolitan zone will be familiar to all journalists and telecasters whose job it is to pinpoint and explain the world's trouble spots. Here we may have another Middle East in the making, another Balkans, another South Africa. At the moment the unrest is subcutaneous and identifiable only by angry blotches on the body politic, but to travel as I have done from Hatfield to Mitcham, from Staines to Dagenham, through the very heart of this troubled region, is to experience the breathless hush that precedes the hurricane. Let me admit, however, that I travelled freely, unarmed and without escort, that no one tried to seize my camera, typewriter, and lie-detector, and that only once—at the South Acton traffic lights—did I encounter any threat of physical violence. Appearances are deceptive.

I propose, at the risk of oversimplification, to tackle the bewildering turbulence of cross-currents county by county. For further details readers are referred to Sefton Delmer, James Cameron, the *Economist* Research Bureau and "Panorama."

SURREY. Predominantly Christian, but with sizable pockets of agnosticism. Economically Surrey is closely linked with the City of London, many thousands of its inhabitants crossing the frontiers daily to work at the great banking, insurance and investment installations. In a showdown Surrey and the City would certainly march shoulder to shoulder. Surrey is possibly the most advanced of the counties in this melting-pot and in consequence has a direct interest in the preservation of the *status quo*.

Surrey maintains an ancient feud with Middlesex, is friendly with Sussex, and seemingly indifferent to the struggle towards self-determination of Kent, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. She has docks and five county cricket championships in a row. Internal

By BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

elements of disruption include the rivalry of Guildford and Kingston as licensing authorities, and the growing power of gangs of incendiaries known locally as "bonfire boys."

ESSEX. Ruggedly independent, this ancient Christian and East Saxon settlement is now under Scottish domination. It controls the Milk Marketing Board, and boasts the Dagenham Girl Pipers and Trevor ("Clever") Bailey. The separatist movement in Essex is strong, and for this reason the various agreements with Suffolk, London County and the Thames Conservancy Board cannot be regarded as more than scraps of paper.



KEY: A-J TO TROUBLE SPOTS

The recent strengthening of the Essex militia ("constabulary") has aroused envy in neighbouring counties and considerable alarm among car-parkers and underground elements. Essex has no baton-making plant on her own soil and relies on shipments from Middlesex and Scotland.

LONDON. Is neutral.

MIDDLESEX. Christian, with important Mohammedan and L.S.E. minorities. This county, as the name implies, may be the nerve-centre of metropolitan vice. It is an uneasy fusion of two older Christian communities, North Middlesex and South Middlesex. Middlesex holds a key position in the Home Counties, standing astride the great road and rail routes to the North and commanding the approaches to the Regent's Canal.

The people are nomadic, industrious, dirty, and have the morals of alley cats. A powder keg.

KENT, HERTS, BUCKS, ETC. Peasant communities governed very largely by absentee beef- and Press-barons. For many years they have been satellites of the metropolitan giants, and much of their best land has been annexed for military purposes—airfields, nuclear power stations, driving test territory and so on. Now they are being wooed by the Midlands, and it is anybody's guess which way they will jump.

Meanwhile the tentacles of the London Underground movement reach deeper and deeper into these wretched counties.

Now look at the map and the indicated danger-spots:

- A. Revolt here could spark World War III.
- B. Important elections are due here in November. Some residents want canal cleaned: others, filled in.
- C. Veering from L.C.C. Closer ties with Surrey.
- D. Racial demonstrations feared in June. West Indian tourists expected to prove "tough customers" at Lord's.
- E. Budding rivalry between Chingford and Walthamstow may give Wanstead seat on Essex Youth League selection panel.
- F. Liberalizing influence of American servicemen?
- G. Anti-Red pressure growing. Mayor-ess and W.I. may send "strong" note to Kremlin condemning cancellation of exchange homecraft visits.
- H. Sutton and Cheam expected to pull back farther from world-wide commitments.
- I. Strong-arm leadership feared. Councillor Masefield? Mrs. Moxon? Alderman Trewthdrug?
- J. Resumption of oil shipments expected in September. Gas and electricity undertakings may be hit. Strikes probable.

All this, of course, represents but one observer's view of the situation. It may be that I have been looking for trouble where none exists, that over-indulgence in Messrs. Delmer and Cameron has warped my judgment. But I don't think so. As I see it the Home Counties are cracking up, and I advise all who can to get out while the going is good.

How about Ulster?



In the City

Whisky and Stout Galore

A POOR summer, and 1956 had one, is reputedly bad for soft drinks and ale, good for stout and spirits. The drinkers of Britain are adaptable: in hot weather they take their sugar, malt, gas and alcohol the long way, in gulps; in a season of rain-ruined cricket and summer chills they sip.

Stout is a concoction of peculiar versatility. To foreigners with a palate for lager, hock or rosé it is a liquid of staggering, even revolting, opacity and density, but to the inhabitants of these western isles it can reflect prismatically all the vagaries of sun, fog, frost and sodden gloom that enchant this ancient terminal of the Gulf Stream. It is gulped and sipped all the year round, and whether it is good for you or not it is certainly a tonic for the investor.

Lord Iveagh's brew, Guinness, is still the favourite whether sold in bottle or on draught, and its profits for the year have shot up by eleven per cent to more than £7 million. The dividend on ordinary shares remains at 25 per cent, so that ten shilling units, now standing at about 41s. 3d., yield just over six per cent. There's nothing flat about these figures.

Into the glass darkly or brightly, Guinness seems a reasonably safe investment. Competition is growing rapidly of course: for sippers there will soon be more whisky on the market—or rather whiskey—in the unfamiliar Old Grand Dad Kentucky bottle imported by Gilbey from the U.S.A., and to preserve the balance between East and West there are now vodkas by Gilbey ("Smirnoff") and Nicholson ("Czar Alexander").

And more genuine, real Scottish McCoy, whisky. Stocks of maturing Scotch have accumulated invitingly in recent years and now stand at about one hundred and ninety million gallons, sixty million more than in 1938 and 1952;

and annual production has grown by thirty per cent during the last five years. Whisky tipplers will remain unimpressed by these figures, for popular labels are still in short supply and a two-shilling nip may either carry the colours of Haig, Walker, Teacher, Vat 69 (which I have heard referred to as the Pope's telephone number), White Horse, Sir Compton Mackenzie and Eric Linklater, or the tartan of some anonymous still deep in the glen.

It really does seem now that the whisky famine is ending. The distillers have no wish to keep the pipelines permanently at low pressure: whisky evaporates and so too can the public's fancy for it. It cannot be in the trade's interest that many thousands of well-to-do workers should be encouraged by the shortage to develop a taste

for other drinks; and the Board of Trade must now, one hopes, be aware of this.

At present nearly three-quarters of total sales go overseas, and nine million gallons out of the sixteen exported find their way down North American throats to earn a handsome reward in dollars. But while this trade is lucrative and attractive to the distiller and to the country, it is a short-sighted policy, surely, to make over-ample provision for unpredictable thirsts overseas at the expense of the home consumer. Bearing duty at £1 4s. 7d., a bottle of Scotch is already a luxury commodity, and people who buy luxuries like to feel that the customer is always right.

I have an idea that before 1957 is out the licensees will be offering whisky galore.

MAMMON

* * *



In the Country

Fur Farming

DURING the last few months I had noticed one of my neighbours occasionally trundling along the lane with a large bin of fish heads in a trailer behind his car. Of course that was a frequent sight and smell all over the country during the war when pig and poultry farmers had to try to balance their homegrown grain with butchers' and fishmongers' offal. But I thought that such drudgery was quite unnecessary to-day when protein feeding-stuff was unrationed. Consequently I couldn't understand why this farmer was going to such trouble to collect fish refuse. I was even more bewildered when I discovered that he wasn't bothering to keep any poultry or pigs. Apparently he had discovered a more profitable line.

From the outside, his mink farm looks like any Dutch piggery. In fact he's merely adapted one into breeding-pens three feet by one, and two feet

apart, with a walk about four feet wide between the rows. The pens were constructed with wire netting of one-inch mesh. Very cheap and easy to contrive.

Apparently quite an industry is already established, judged by the catalogues, brochures and other literature from mink breeders littering my neighbour's office. It won't be many months now before some publisher announces the title *How to Breed Your Own Mink Coat*.

But let me warn you, it's quite an expensive side-line to start. A male mink costs £27 if of the Platinum Silver Blu variety, and £45 if an Aleutian. Females are about £15 cheaper in either variety.

Unlike the people whom they adorn, the creatures themselves mate only once a year. The season takes place in March, and the females whelp after a period of about fifty-two days' gestation. Litters vary in size, but the average contains about four kits. A young mink is no bigger than a cigarette when born.

The animals are fed only once a day, on a diet of 80 per cent fish offal, 5 per cent liver, 10 per cent cereal with vitamins A and D to supplement. Wheat germ oil is given prior to the mating season. Each mink requires about 8 to 10 ounces of feed a day.

About November the pelts are taken by electrocuting the animals. Most of these new mink-farmers send their skins to London to be dressed.

The ultimate aim is to sell the pelts to the Hudson Bay Company. I'm told it can be very profitable—if two years' produce doesn't end up on your wife's back.

RONALD DUNCAN



BOOKING OFFICE

Eheu! Eheu!

By the *Ionian Sea*. George Gissing. *The Richards Press*, 12/6

IN his subacid biographical foreword to this reprint Mr. Frank Swinerton hints that Gissing's hardships were bogus, that most of his misery was his own fault and that in fact he did better out of being a professional writer than many literary men. This bluff approach belongs to an economic rather than a psychological age. Gissing was obviously mildly ill, and the man whose unhappiness is inside himself and curable only by the will it is paralysing may be much more pitiable than the man whose unhappiness is, however remotely, remediable, even if it needs the overthrowing of society to remedy it. At least the revolutionary has a busy, interesting time. Nobody who goes in for amateur bomb-making can be bored.

Gissing had the advantage of living in a time that took professionalism very seriously, so that his talent was disciplined. He was an unexpectedly competent minor novelist. One would have expected him to be a kind of Enoch Soames, a damp emanation leaving behind him only a smell of linoleum and a small volume of derivative lyrics. Instead he created solid character and rendered with pioneer fidelity aspects of society that had never been described before. Loneliness, concealed poverty, drabness, human wastage were his subjects, and he knew both the joyless surfaces and the underlying social trends, or some of them. His world was the world of Wells but he never saw the gaiety and buoyancy and avidity that Wells saw, probably because he saw himself as going down while Wells saw himself as coming up. *The Odd Women*, for example, gives a clear enough account of the plight of the daughters of educated men, it is compassionate and it never allows its strong structure to be eroded by propaganda; but it is not really more than a superficial sketch of the problem. Similarly, in his book on *Dickens*

Gissing saw all sorts of things that writers without his peculiar experience had missed; but the inclusive sound of its title is misleading. Much of Dickens he simply could not see.

Gissing's last books moved away from the description of lower-middle class pretensions and penury to a contrasting description of the attainment of such pale satisfactions as fate allowed him.



The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft is a cry of thanks for a minimal private income. This is a cry that many of us would echo; but the uses to which the long-yearned-for liberty is put are depressing. Retirement seems a living death. Books are read and views admired in a dreadful exhibitionist way. It is an appallingly smug, snooty, pseudo-scholarly little book, far inferior to the realist novels, and it is written in pompous clichés. (My secondhand copy is inscribed "A birthday present from a Rabbit to a Kangaroo. Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clevsy.")

I had remembered *By the Ionian Sea* as a moving evocation of dead cities by a little-visited shore, a book full of the poetry of decay and gleams from the golden past. Re-reading it, I found a

slovenly chronicle of discomforts, the scrag-end of a robust tradition that goes back to Smollett repellently sicklied over with references to scholarship and the fineness of the writer's feelings. How the travel book has improved this century! Gissing might, perhaps, have invented a *genre* still happily non-existent, the Redbrick travel book. He might have been a minor Lawrence—were his opportunities fewer than Lawrence's? Instead, he produced a sour imitation of the work of better men. He saw himself as the gentlemanly scholar, whimsically amused by the natives, inflamed before famous sites by recollections of the classics, responding to Nature as none of the residents and precious few tourists would respond.

All his life Gissing paraded his scholarship. The hardships of his teaching life were designed to provide him with leisure to read in the British Museum library, where he spent much of his time. It was all bogus. Gissing wanted to be able to boast of having read classical authors in the original. He never seems to have studied anything for its own sake. He was the first-floor front who awes the skivvy by reading Latin from a calf-bound book while she slams the cold mutton on the table. He was as far as one can get from healthy human curiosity. He was not a university teacher; but nor were Gibbon and Ventris. He could have joined the great company of local antiquaries and natural historians. He could have read from pure hedonism, for fun. Instead, his scholarship is a matter of quoting proper names and pride in knowing silly little points of detail, even in having read Cassiodorus. There is a strain of Gissing in one type of schoolmaster, though it is dying out, a strain that is important in the history of modern education. Good has come from intellectual and social classes both below and above that of Gissing. From the frustrations and inadequacies and petty vanities of his own stratum have come evils that are at best seedy and at worst poisonous. As a tragic figure, Gissing is less funny than the shabby-genteel schoolmaster so brilliantly acted

by the late Will Hay. As a comic figure, he is no more pathetic than Richard Haydn's Fish-Mimic and much less pathetic than Mr. Pooter.

R. G. G. PRICE

Madame Solario. Heinemann, 13/-

A taste of Marion-Crawford, a suggestion of Thackeray, more than either of Henry James. This novel's strength lies in the distinction of the names it recalls; its weakness in the fact that they are the names of the dead.

It deals with the era before the first world war. Among all the fashionable beauties staying at a resort on Lake Como, Madame Solario is the most exquisite, but, alas, an unpleasant scandal darkens her past. At fifteen she had been seduced, not unwillingly, by her stepfather. Her brother had been sent into exile for shooting at the seducer; her mother died of a broken heart. Later she was married off to a wealthy husband with whom she does not live. When her brother turns up unexpectedly at the lakeside hotel he does so in the hope of sharing the fortune he believes she has inherited. This fatally handsome pair, the centre of a brilliant social life, join forces to bring wretchedness and destruction to those who love them. For two-thirds of its course the book is told with great competence and grace; the last pages leave one with a sour taste on the tongue.

O. M.

The Good-tempered Pencil. Fougasse. Max Reinhardt, 20/-

Of making collections of comic drawings there is no end; but this one of "Fougasse's" is quite different. He uses his two hundred selected pictures—mostly from *Punch* and *The New Yorker*, but modestly excluding any of his own—as the basis of a long essay inquiring into the essential nature of comic art. With his experience as artist, art-editor and editor, "Fougasse" is uniquely qualified to conduct such an inquiry, and his book turns out, not surprisingly, to be both absorbing and diverting.

Certainly no one professionally concerned with humorous art can afford to be without it; but it is not only of technical interest. Everyone who has ever laughed at a "Fougasse" drawing will enjoy this amiable exposition of how it's done, and even those whose reading powers stop short at a couple of lines of caption may treasure it as another collection of comic drawings, and a first-class one at that.

B. A. Y.

My Memories of Six Reigns. H.H. Princess Marie Louise. Evans, 30/-

The late Princess Marie Louise lived only just long enough to see the publication of her memoirs. She had always taken a great interest in the history of her family; she points out that its members are ordinary people with unusual opportunities for interesting experiences. Her gossip about her cousins and visits to

Africa and musical evenings is too humble in tone to be criticized from a literary point of view; but the best bits are so much fuller of character than the worst bits that one suspects a strong personality had been muted by discretion.

The amount of varied work that Her Highness describes, work often done in considerable discomfort, her obvious desire to be helpful, and the frustrating tradition that Royalty ought to be amateurish and in the Chair rather than professional and at the bedside make one wonder whether the post-Victorian Court has not wasted a lot of ability. In the Middle Ages, minor Royalty, apart from the occupational risks, had more chance to enjoy the satisfactions of a career.

R. G. G. P.

The Victorian Heroine. Patricia Thomson. Oxford, 18/-

Delicacy, frailty and abysmal ignorance of life—such was the legacy of the eighteenth century to Englishwomen, and it took them until roughly the accession of Victoria to begin to drag themselves from what Dr. Thomson, in this witty and scholarly book, calls the "quagmire of sensibility." By 1873 most of the emancipation movements were under weigh, and it is in these important thirty-six years that she examines the effects of women's growing rebellion on novelists for the most part reluctant to abandon the romantic heroine for less malleable creatures passionately interested in subjects as awkward as prostitution, sanitation, and freedom.

Enemy Number One, and deeply rooted, was the divine authority of man. On the whole the minor novelists give a clearer picture of the ferment in a social scene otherwise so complacent as to be almost incredible. Dr. Thomson's quotations are staggering, and the intelligence of her commentary owes much to her irony and restraint.

E. O. D. K.

They Saw It Happen. An Anthology of Eye-witnesses' Accounts of Events in British History, 1485-1688. Compiled by C. R. N. Routh, with a Foreword by R. Birley. Blackwell, 15/-

"History, by and large," Mr. Routh well remarks, "is men and women and children, not coal and railways and wages." His anthology is about people: it ranges wide, with plenty of pageantry and executions. He describes the great archives and collections on which it is based—sources not easily come by. The book, with its appeal to the youthful imagination, should be widely read.

Here is colour and incident, but not much for romantics. Politically the past is pretty grim. Some narrators, enmeshed in intrigue, write with cagy clumsiness, in contrast to the born writers—Pepys, Aubrey and Evelyn. But the book is full of intimate touches. Henry VIII's fingers were "one mass of jewelled rings"; even in old age, Elizabeth I "did



"Khrushchev and Bulganin are squares; for real cool cats give me Percukhin, Malyshev, Kosygin and Matskerich."

not look ugly, when seen from a distance," though her teeth were black. Charles II's bedroom was full of dogs and of clocks that chimed at all hours. The Founding Fathers sound smug. John Ware, a Swanage fisher boy, sensibly told the Inquisition what he thought they wanted him to say. But when Dr. Harvey published his discovery of the circulation of the blood his practice much fell off. "He was wont," writes Aubrey, "to say that man was but a great mischievous baboon."

J. E. B.

AT THE PANTOMIME

The Wonderful Lamp

(PALLADIUM)

Dick Whittington (PALACE)

WHETHER bare-kneed or waving an ear-trumpet, your true panto purists will allow no trifling with the principal boy. She must have dazzlingly long legs and a d'Artagnan manner, and of course she must be a she. I am not among these extremists, owing to the depressing tendency of principal boys to become involved in romantic songs which are palpably fraudulent and every bit as saddening, it seems, to the children in the audience as they are to me.

To us non-purists the choice of Norman Wisdom for Aladdin in *The Wonderful Lamp* is to be applauded. Not yet a comedian of wide range, he has nevertheless a rich little-man pathos and the winning simplicity that quickly gets us children on his side. His energy is

unlimited. Facing up to the Emperor of China his barrow-boy impudence becomes a notable blow for democracy, and in the magic cave he forces us to share his terror. Panto's elastic sides are not stretched too far when, demanding a glimpse of the future, he finds himself in a TV studio and flings himself into one of his own crazy acts.

It is a pity that both he and Sonnie Hale, who works equally hard as the Widow Twankey, are so poorly served in the way of gags, for the generosity and taste of Robert Nesbitt's production make this in other respects an outstanding pantomime. There are none of the tatty scenes in which the management can be felt tightening the purse-strings; effect follows effect with originality, in lavish spectacle free from any tinny vulgarity. Edward Delany did the décor, R. St. John Roper the dresses. The chorus is lively, and first-rate oriental turns are thrown in—a wonderful man whipping a long ribbon into whirling patterns, two girls who can do anything with diabolos, and a delightful acrobatic troupe.

But if a principal boy is wanted, as in *Dick Whittington*, then Beryl Stevens is the kind to have, for though it is never easy to see her as a future Lord Mayor she has a gallant personality and doesn't take the romantic plunges too seriously. Of these there are a good many, most of them are pretty goofy, but at least she

and the Alderman's daughter, Joyce Mandre, can sing, without glueing themselves anxiously to a mike. This is a more conventional panto, on a smaller scale. It is not presented so excitingly as *The Wonderful Lamp*, but the scenery is again by Edward Delany, who takes us confidently from Cheapside to Morocco, while Doris Zinkeisen dresses gaily a cast backed by the Palace Girls and the Terry Children.

Once more, less trouble appears to have been taken with the book than the production (here both are by Emile Littler), and some of the question-and-answer routines go on much too long. Fortunately George Formby's smile can stand by itself, expanding as smoothly as a patent suitcase, until the whole house is in danger of being engulfed. His Idle Jack potters and bumbles with an amiability hard to resist, until near the end out come the Formby ukeles, and sloth is forgotten in a flashing bombardment. His is naturally the music-hall approach; quite different from the highly professional panto skill with which Ernest Arnley, who joins in most of his fooling, plays the old-time scarlet-bloomered dame, coy, big-booted, double-jointed and loyal to the traditional technique of landlady slapstick that can never really fail.

Dick's dream (Titania taking an inexplicable interest in the affairs of the Mansion House) is well staged, and then we begin to travel fairly briskly. Margaret

Thackray, who leads the dances, is a distinct asset, for she can be funny and graceful at the same time. And after a dull start the Two Pirates finish their act in triumph, with spoof acrobatics in which the smaller pirate is flown, not exactly surreptitiously, on a wire.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

The Diary of Anne Frank (Phoenix—5/12/56), sensitively staged. *Mrs. Gibbons' Boys* (Westminster—26/12/56), America mocking her mothers. *These Foolish Kings* (Victoria Palace—2/1/57), the Crazy Gang mocking themselves.

ERIC KEOWN



AT THE BALLET

The Prince of the Pagodas
(COVENT GARDEN)

THOSE who believe that the days of the one-act ballet of Diaghilev's innovation are numbered had substantial grounds for satisfaction when the curtain fell three hours after its rising at the Royal Opera House on the first full-length work to be newly commissioned in all its parts for the Sadler's Wells company. They had, moreover, witnessed a performance in which the dancing was in the main entrusted to younger members of the company; the choreography the work of another of the same generation, John Cranko; and the sumptuous costumes designed by a bearded stripling, Desmond Heeley.

If one came away feeling that the No. 1 hero of the evening was the relatively mature Benjamin Britten that was because of the complete mastery he manifested over his share of the collaboration. As my colleague Charles Reid remarked, it was so superbly professional. Britten thrives on difficulties of his own creation and I share my colleague's doubts about any other hand than Britten's drawing such apt and diverse movement from a thematic and harmonic stock so narrow as that to which he confines himself.

Frederick Ashton, who used already existing scores for the other two full-length ballets in the Sadler's Wells repertory, may detect some echoes of his own invention in the choreography of *The Prince of the Pagodas*, but it is unmistakably—sometimes ingenuously—the work of a young adventurer. In devising a fairy story Mr. Cranko has provided himself with useful escape clauses from its logical development, and he uses them constantly to allow the dancers to display their art without so much as a glance at a story which borrows from *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and has a strong dash of *King Lear*.

It is easy to find fault with this eager, ambitious work. Some ballet-lovers will object to its acrobatics and athleticism, and to its stops and starts. Others will jib at its use of mechanical tricks. But all such innovations are the welcome

[*The Wonderful Lamp*
Aladdin—NORMAN WISDOM



mark of a lively mind. Sadler's Wells ballet is clearly not in a rut of conventional charm, prettiness or virtuosity. A stimulating evening (with the slightly Non-U label, world *première*) and animated discussion of the ballet's merits were a first testimony to its vitality.

Svetlana Beriosova in the leading role has no spectacular demands to fulfil, but she brings to the part of an ill-used Princess a radiant purity and grace. Julia Farron as her cruel and imperious sister is brilliant, as ever, and Leslie Edwards's miming of the royal father, whom she supplants, is unexpectedly moving. David Blair, as the Prince, has now the confidence of a true *danseur noble*. Unusual prominence comes the way of male dancers. Pirmin Trecu and Ray Powell as good and evil courtiers, and Desmond Doyle, Philip Chatfield, Peter Clegg and Gary Burne as suitor kings have some of the best of Mr. Britten's ingenious rhythms and Mr. Cranko's wit. Among the women Anya Linden in unadorned fleshings is a miracle of acrobatic grace. Later, with Merle Park and Maryon Lane she has a share, in a *pas de six*, of gay, classical steps *en tutu*.

Mr. Cranko excels in the *ensembles* and is fortunate to command a *corps de ballet* which projects his ideas so excitingly. John Piper's settings have well caught the spirit of the fantasy.

C. B. MORTLOCK



AT THE PICTURES

Baby Doll *The Spanish Gardener*

IT may be annoying for you, when you see *Baby Doll* (Director: Elia Kazan), to hear less grown-up members of the audience laughing—indeed, belly-laughing—from time to time as if at pure slapstick; but it is quite undeniable that plenty of the scenes here are funny, and meant to be laughed at. The fact that some people can't tell the difference between mere empty slapstick and a ludicrous effect that has, as it were, overtones (and somehow show they can't, by the way they laugh)—this fact is unfortunate but unavoidable.

By this time—these words appear as always after the beginning of the London showing, but most critics wrote for publication at least a week before it—you can hardly fail to be aware that the central characters in this far from fragrant piece are the childishly immature "Baby Doll" and her shambling middle-aged husband Archie Lee, whom she has still not allowed to consummate the marriage. The story begins just before her twentieth birthday, when their "agreement" on this point is due to expire, and she is seeking an excuse to avoid her obligations. A useful one is provided by the removal of the unpaid-for furniture; and this, and her intransigence, and the fact that at the same time there is a celebration at which



[*Baby Doll*]

Baby Doll Meighan—CARROLL BAKER

Silva Vacarro—ELI WALLACH

Silva Vacarro, the man who has almost put the husband out of business, is praised—all this drives Archie Lee to drink and arson.

Then Silva the rival, out for revenge, scares "Baby Doll" into signing away her husband's alibi, and without going so far as to seduce her, goes far enough to make the husband believe he did. This sends Archie Lee over the edge: he runs wild with a shotgun and has to be taken away, and the last view we have of Silva and "Baby Doll" implies that he is taking her away to their mutual satisfaction.

The strength of the piece is in the way it is done: the acting is admirable, including that of Carroll Baker as the sulky, empty-headed, childish "Baby Doll" herself as she is gradually awakened by the calculating approaches of the "Wop" Silva (Eli Wallach). Karl Malden too as the disappointed, frustrated "poor white" Archie Lee is able to make a quite memorable impression. It is not a charming or elevating work and it is not for the young, but I very much doubt (*pace* Cardinal Spellman, who has forbidden it to U.S. Catholics) that it could lead anyone into wickedness; and it is entertaining and even (see above) horrifyingly funny.

Some people have apparently been worried by the fact that in *The Spanish Gardener* (Director: Philip Leacock) the Spanish gardener himself, and a number of other Spanish characters, are heard speaking ordinary unaccented English; and they even try to defend their uneasiness logically, as if there were more sense in the absurd convention by which

a family of (e.g.) Spaniards in their own home, no one else present but the impersonal camera, are made to jabber the pidgin English of the stage "foreigner." Some convention has to be accepted (short of using the original language with superimposed titles—that has been done, too), and this one seems to me perfectly acceptable.

This is from a novel by A. J. Cronin: the Spanish gardener (Dirk Bogarde) works for a minor British consular official (Michael Hordern) who is selfishly possessive with his young son (Jon Whiteley). The lonely little boy makes a friend of the gardener, and the father, an embittered, disappointed character, becomes crazily jealous. That is the central situation, and the happy ending (father and son reach a "new understanding") seems rather forced; but the quiet, unpretentious film as a whole is attractive. Mr. Hordern is admirable in his unsympathetic part, and visually (VistaVision Technicolor photography: Christopher Challis) the piece is full of beauty.

* * * * *

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Three Men in a Boat I found disappointing: too laboriously funny. (Verbal humour doesn't translate into visual slapstick.) *High Society* (26/12/56) is a very enjoyable musical, and *The Silent World* (12/12/56) is a wonderful documentary.

Among the new releases is *Tiger in the Smoke* (5/12/56), well-done crime melodrama. *Brink of Hell* (2/1/57) is about the testing of jet planes—noisy but interesting. RICHARD MALLETT



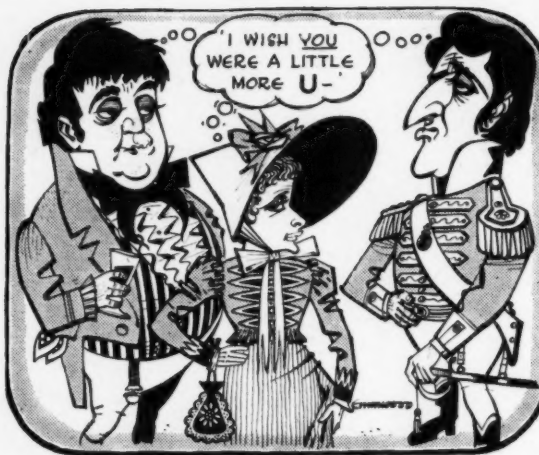
ON THE AIR

All is Vanity

LOOKING back on my festive sessions with the little screen I have no difficulty in making the following awards: for an unintentionally comical script, the B.B.C.'s outside broadcast from the Paris Lido; for a display of misplaced talent, Max Bygraves; for a delicious example of party spirit à la Portland Place, the end-of-term romp of the "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?" team; for making much out of little, the Lockwoods, Margaret and Julia, in Dodie Smith's *Call it a Day*; for an insufferably expert revival of the Inquisition, Hughie Green's examination of Lord May of Weybridge in "Double Your Money"; for prose of unparalleled futility, the B.B.C.'s television news.

The Lido cabaret show was like cricket at the South Pole. Not once but at every opportunity we were reminded that the gorgeous long-stemmed creatures of the chorus were "good girls" of decent British stock. They all came from highly respectable families (the thrifty professional classes) and they were all serious students of something other than the terpsichorean arts. On the side, and possibly for business reasons, it was explained that their TV costumes were somewhat more voluminous and discreet than their usual stage garb, and it really did seem that their dancing was handicapped by the restrictive scanties.

It is funny, in a macabre way, to hear the young parsons of "Meeting Point" using such bright and vaguely naughty words as "gosh," "golly," and "helluva": it is even funnier when the B.B.C. steps



Joseph Sedley—JACK MAY

Ratdon Cratley—ALAN BADEL

Becky Sharp—JOYCE REDMAN

[Vanity Fair]

out boldly in quest of shocking pink and then apologizes (with modesty vest) for any hint of nudity that might creep into the programme. This was a memorable essay in bureaucratic schizophrenia.

As for Max Bygraves, who croons pleasantly enough, why was he allowed to ruin an otherwise jolly half-hour of song and dance with shabby verbal buffoonery and a mushy photograph album of the Bygraves family? When I turned away in embarrassment from this latter item to consult *Radio Times* I learned with surprise and sorrow that the script was by Eric Sykes and the production by Graeme Muir.

Mary Adams, David Attenborough and Paul Johnstone, the originators of "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?" (I played the game as a boy), made a cheerful and erudite dish to set before those kingpins of archaeological mirth, Glyn Daniel and Sir Mortimer Wheeler. The marking

was generous, the panel got home quite comfortably, and a good time was had by all.

One remark, by Paul Johnstone, deserves special mention. Holding aloft some unremarkable exhibit he mentioned that the viewers would not be able to see the inscription on the base, and he never spoke a truer word. "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?" is an enjoyable game, as I have said before, only when the viewer is given the same chance as the studio panel of identifying the paraded museum pieces. In the art and architecture contests the disadvantage of being on the wrong side of the screen can be minimized, as it could be, and more easily, if the game were extended to cover more of the things we see in everyday life, scraps of industrial

and commercial art, book illustration, industrial and scientific installations, and so on. The trouble with Anivezmin is that we are expected, far too often, to look backwards through the dust of rooms full of antiques and junk.

The new serial, *Vanity Fair*, adapted by Constance Cox and Ian Dallas and produced by Campbell Logan, has jumped away to a splendid start. Joyce Redman makes a bewitching Becky Sharp, and is supported most gallantly by Alan Badel, Petra Davies, Jack May, Derek Blomfield, David Peel and Lloyd Pearson. Inevitably, as in all serialized novels, the bare bones of narrative are allowed to project rather obviously, but it is greatly to the credit of the adaptors, and players, the producer and designer (Stephen Bundy) that the instalments contain a good measure of the essential Thackeray irony. Good show.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD



DOUGLAS.

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